



Louie Records

WHIRLED JAZZ  
Mukilteo  
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Negating the old adage that those that can do, those that can't teach, a couple of Oregon university professors have created this fully professional session, which is as straightforward as it is unpretentious.

Containing elements of post bop, outside sounds and West Coast cool, Whirled Jazz seems to comfortably fit all three elements into its conception. A lot more than an after-school indulgence, Whirled Jazz could easily hold its own anywhere in the Pacific area, but, of course, can't be compared to full-time, exploratory groups that exist in larger centres like the Bay area and Vancouver, B.C. Member of the popular, local Tone Sharks band, alto saxophonist and flutist

Tom Bergeron, who also wrote all the music here, has a day job as professor at Western Oregon University (WOU). Also a teacher at WOU, trombonist Keller Coker is even a University of Southern California jazz studies graduate, though that shouldn't be held against him. Bassist Page Hundemer went to Boston's Berklee College and has played on most CDs on the Louie label, which happens to be owned by discriminating drummer Dave Storrs, another Tone Shark.

As light and biting as saltwater spray, the music here gets much of its impetus from the trombone-alto saxophone blend. Many times, as on "Pacific Crest" and "Tadasana" -- the two longest tracks -- the front liners appear to harmonize on similar notes, octaves apart of course. Here, as elsewhere Bergeron's tone seems to be 2 1/2 parts Cannonball Adderley, 1 1/2 parts Phil Woods plus a tincture of Ornette Coleman. Flute flights are less impressive since on his one feature, "Radiance", he doesn't seem able to transform the almost weightless, practically legit tone he produces. Plus the trombone flute blends sound awkward, sort of like a tuna mating with a minnow.

Bergeron's writing is particularly impressive throughout, however, lightly -- there's that word again -- swinging, and with several pieces switching from a striding to a speeding tempo mid way through. Lithe, smooth and speedy as if he's playing a valve instrument, Coker never seems to lose his cool. This is especially apparent on "Tadasana", where a plunger section suggests clean Pacific water a lot more than the dirty Mississippi river. This tendency is even more apparent on "Franklin", which while well played would never be confused with any tune that arose out of the Chitlin' Circuit.

Thoroughly modern, Hundemer produces an in-your-face bass line that can easily be heard through the other instruments' work, though whether that's the result of his fingers or Storrs's engineering is another question. Often called upon to introduce the compositions, sometimes he strums his bull fiddle like a guitar. Still he realizes that it's his job to accompany the soloists, not overpower them with macho Jaco Pastorius-like posturing. Perspicacious and unassuming, Storrs hugs the background as well, usually coloring the proceedings with some buoyant percussion asides rather than full-bore drum artillery.

While MUKILTEO is no world-beater, it's a pleasant enough romp that will probably be appreciated by many people. More importantly it shows that at least where music is concerned, those who teach, can.

-- Ken Waxman

Track Listing: 1. Mukilteo 2. Huan-San 3. Pacific Crest 4. Tadasana 5. Franklin 6. Radiance

Personnel: Keller Coker (trombone); Tom Bergeron (alto saxophone and flute); Page Hundemer (bass); Dave Storrs (drums)

