

Cadence

THE REVIEW of JAZZ & BLUES: CREATIVE IMPROVISED MUSIC

**DARRELL KATZ with the
JAZZ COMPOSERS ALLIANCE ORCH.,
DREAMLAND,
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Tonk / Chimera / Cake Smeared on Car / Dancing on a Table / Zen and the Art of Cab Driving / Hot Winds over Cool Breeze -1 / Left Overs / Monk -2.
74-48.

Mike Peipman, John Carlson, tpt; David Harris, Bob Pilington, tbn; W. Marshall Sealy, Fr hn; Jim O'Dell, tba; Douglas Yates, as, cl; Andrew D'Angelo, as; Rob Scheps, ts, ss; Kathy Halverson, bars, flt, ob; Doug Johnson, kbyd; Diana Herold, vib; John Dirac, el-g; Howard Britz, b; Gisha Alexiev, d; Taid Masuko, perc.

On -1: Mike Peipman, John Carlson, tpt; David Harris, Bob Pilington, tbn; W. Marshall Sealy, Fr hn; Jim O'Dell, tba; Douglas Yates, as, cl; Andrew D'Angelo, as; Joel Springer, ts; Dan Boeshardt, bars; Doug Johnson, kbyd; Darrell Katz, syn; Diana Herold, vib; Rick Peckham, el-g; Howard Britz, b; Gisha Alexiev, d; Jerry Leake, perc. On -2: Dave Balou, John Carlson, Joel Cohn, Tom Hatter, Ken Schaphorst, tpt; Curtis Haasebring, Russell Jewell, Bob Pilington, Josh Roseman, tbn; W. Marshall Sealy, Mark Taylor, Fr hn; Jim O'Dell, tba; Allen Chase, Julius Hemphill, Douglas Yates, Bob Zung, as; Curtis Cheeks, Russ Gershon, Rob Scheps, ts; Jay Brandford, Charlie Kohlase, bars; John Medeski, p; Ben Sher, el-g; Mike Noonan, vib; Wesley Wirth, b; Ron Savage, d; Jerry Leake, George Schuller, perc. Blue Jay Recording Studio, Carlisle, MA, 4/21-22/92. -1 recorded at Harp Studios, Braintree, MA, 10/22/91. -2 at The Emerson Majestic Theatre, Boston, 11/19/89.

A distinctive Boston big band tradition is by now firmly established. The Jazz Composers Alliance Orchestra doesn't have the reputation of some of their competitors, but with releases like *Flux* (a no-contest entry in my 10 best list for 1993) that will change in a hurry. Composer, arranger, and conductor Darrell Katz was represented on *Flux* by a clever set of variations on Jimi Hendrix's "Manic Depression." Now he's got a whole disk to himself.

As expected, you get a combination of originals (all extended pieces showing considerable stylistic ebb and flow - "Chimera" is the perfect title) and tunes that you'd never think a big band would cover. "Tonk," a quiet piano duet for Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn, has been converted into a shimmering score. And for uncomplicated down-home fare, balancing the diet the way that "Down at Pepper's" or "Blu Blu Blu" does on one of Muhal's programs, what could be better than an Albert Collins entrée ("Left Overs")?

In Boston, whose "street plan" was conceived around 1650, nobody gets anywhere fast and everybody gets lost, including cab drivers. Appropriately, as Katz says in the liner notes (unfortunately printed in eye-strain special) "Zen and the Art of Cab Driving" is about learning patience." Andrew D'Angelo doesn't learn the lesson in his heated alto solo, and gets his comeuppance in the

Minimalist traffic jam that follows. Katz's other pieces are equally packed with incident, and I would fill up a lot of pages trying to give a blow-by-blow account of them. The cast of thousands is stellar - Rob Scheps is again hoarsely impressive on tenor sax (on one occasion, tenor and soprano simultaneously) but you can't go wrong with any of the soloists here. I do have to draw some attention to the well-managed ensemble juggernaut (JCAO joined by most of Either/Orchestra, half of Your Neighborhood Sax Quartet, and unsung drummer Ron Savage, and a few assorted members of Orange then Blue) that closes out the disk. Julius Hemphill burns in his lengthy guest solo, but Scheps will not be outclassed (good quote from Sonny Rollins' "East Broadway Run Down").



Darrell Katz

Katz' music is denser and less light-hearted than the output of many of his Beantown compatriots. Maybe it's just as well that several of the compositions were excerpted from the three-movement suites they once belonged to... Nonetheless, this one deserves a place on your shelf next to *Flux* and the works of Either/Orchestra.

Robert L. Campbell