

DOWNBEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

September 1994



Darrell Katz Jazz Composers Alliance Orchestra

DREAMLAND—Cadence Jazz 1053: *Tonk*; *Chimera*; *Cake Smear'd On Car*; *Dancing On A Table*; *Zen And The Art Of Cab Driving*; *Hot Winds Over Cool Breeze*; *Left Overs*; *Monk*. (74:47)

Personnel: Douglas Yates, alto sax, clarinet; Andrew D'Angelo, alto sax; Rob Scheps, tenor, soprano saxes; Kathy Halverson, baritone sax, flute, oboe; Mike Peipman, John Carlson, trumpets; W. Marshall Sealy, french horn; David Harris, Bob Pilkington, trombones; Jim O'Dell, tuba; Grisha Alexiev, drums; Howard Britz, bass; John Dirac, guitar; Diana Herold, vibraphone, marimba; Doug Johnson, keyboards; with many others, including Julius Hemphill, Allan Chase, alto saxes (8); John Medeski, piano (8); Joel Springer, tenor sax (6).

★ ★ ★ 1/2

Dreamland is a group of large-scale compositions arranged, conducted, and (mostly) composed by Jazz Composers Alliance Orchestra director Darrell Katz. Ranging from more orchestral arrangements such as the deep, dark "Chimera" to the propulsive big-band bounding on "Cake Smear'd On Car," Katz favors bold statements, riffing backdrops, vibraphone and marimba colors, and bright, brassy, at times showy orchestrations. He also finds particularly inventive ways to integrate electric guitar into the group, slipping bits of rock and blues into the jazz experience. For example, listen to John Dirac's chopped comping under W. Marshall Sealy's french horn solo on "Zen And The Art Of Cab Driving."

JCA, a Boston-based collective, originally formed in 1986, brings the charts to life, pitting challenging solos against the involved charts. Trumpeter John Carlson and saxists Rob Scheps, Douglas Yates, and Andrew D'Angelo deserve special mention; Katz's only instrumental appearance (on synthesizer) unfortunately closes the disc's only bummer track, "Hot Winds Over Cool Breeze." There's a neat dab of Ellingtonia ("Tonk") and a slightly heavy-handed series of gutbucket solos on Albert Collins' "Left Overs," as well as a guest cadenza from alto master Julius Hemphill on "Monk," the disc's only live track.

One minor complaint: why do percussionists use chime racks? Like bell trees, they're instant cheeseball. Taki Masuko's cameo chimework on "Chimera" and "Dancing On A Table" lends the proceedings an inappropriately over-slick gloss.

—John Corbett