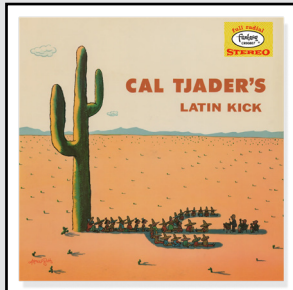


DROP THE NEEDLE



Latin Kick
Cal Tjader (Fantasy-Craft)
by Kurt Gottschalk

There's a lot to consider about Cal Tjader on the occasion of his centennial (Jul. 16). The St. Louis-born vibraphonist, son to a Swedish-American vaudevillian duo, made his name on lounge-infused appropriations of Cuban and Latin rhythms, but unwittingly gave back by being sampled on hundreds of hip-hop tracks. Over a recording career of more than half a century, Tjader became a force in '70s jazz fusion, but it's the unquestionable grooves of his questionable cultural borrowings for which he's most remembered.

Looking back at cultural artefacts of the recent past—*Latin Kick* itself will turn 75 next year—requires more than one lens. Kitsch was the order of the day, and that's just what many will be looking for when picking up this 180-gr vinyl reissue. The front cover looks like the background matte of an old Speedy

Gonzalez cartoon, the back not dissimilar from a *MAD* magazine panel. Both illustrations are by Arnold Roth—who had already done a number of covers for Tjader's old boss, Dave Brubeck—and both are retained for the new pressing (as is the "full radial STEREO" emblem from an earlier reissue). But the real measure is, of course, the music. It's not Latin jazz, it's its own measure of exotica, and it's charmingly infectious. The best tracks are by the extensive rhythm section: Tjader, brothers Manuel (piano) and Carlos (bass) Duran, Luis Miranda (congas) and Bayardo Velarde (timbales) make up 5/6 of the band. Duran and Tjader in particular engage in wonderful interplay, both in sync and in rhythmic opposition.

The vibraphone came to represent the cheese of easy listening, but it's vibing again in jazz in recent years, as exemplified by Sasha Berliner, Patricia Brennan, Sae Hashimoto, Kuniko Kato, Selendis Sebastian Alexander Johnson, Ches Smith and Yuhuan Su, to name several, so we can give Tjader his due. He might not stand up to the inventiveness of Milt Jackson or Bobby Hutcherson, but he was a fine arranger and bandleader with close to a dozen albums under his name by the time *Latin Kick* came out. Such tunes as "All the Things You Are" and "September Song", not to mention "I Love Paris" and "Moonlight in Vermont", might not scream "south of the border," but work exceptionally well in this setting. Sure, it's an outdated kick, but it's a kick nonetheless.

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Bloom
Anat Cohen Quartetinho (Anzic)
by Andrew Schinder

In a genre where trumpet and saxophone players may seem to come the proverbial dime a dozen, Anat Cohen has forged her own path as possibly the preeminent jazz clarinetist of her generation. Having dominated annual readers and critics polls (including *DownBeat*, *JazzTimes*, and the Jazz Journalists Association Awards) as clarinetist of the year for nearly two decades, Cohen has set the standard for an instrument that may seem to some as quaint and old-fashioned but, as she has proven, has the potential and power to enthrall.

The prolific clarinet-tenor saxophone player has spent much of her recent career splitting her time between her two main groups, the sprawling Anat Cohen Tentet, and the 3 Cohens, in which she is joined by her brothers, Yuval (soprano) and Avishai (trumpet). She's also magically conjured up the bandwidth to found a third group, her Quartetinho (Portuguese for "little quartet"). Drawn from Tentet members, Quartetinho released its second album, *Bloom*, last fall in which Cohen largely trades the traditions of her native Israel for an exploration of Brazilian jazz and Argentinean tango, with klezmer influences woven in.

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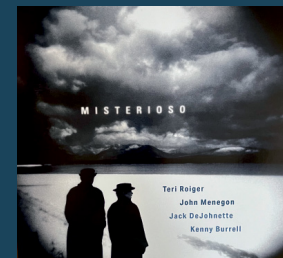
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