

Mobley's "A Peck a Sec", an uptempo run through on rhythm changes. "My Romance" is a feature for Alexander; the two saxophonists and LeDonne shine on another Mobley composition, the minor-toned soul jazz blues "Soft Impressions". The joyful set concludes with the relatively brief cooker "Mo's Theme". Suffice it to say, it all works well on this predictably excellent encounter.

For more info visit smokesessionsrecords.bandcamp.com. The album release concert is at Smoke Aug. 13-17. See Calendar.



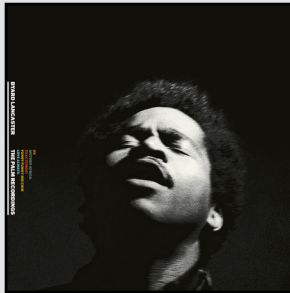
Blue Bossa in the Bronx: Live From the Blue Morocco
Kenny Dorham (Resonance)
by Duck Baker

The late trumpeter Kenny Dorham's recording career began 80 years ago, and for most of those years, jazz writers and musicians have been lamenting the degree to which he is underrated. It's as true now as ever, and will probably only get worse in the future. Even Fats Navarro, who was arguably the greatest of all bebop trumpeters, seems largely forgotten at this point. But while Navarro did not survive the age of bop, Dorham continued to grow as a musician, only to remain overshadowed during the hard bop era, first by Miles Davis and Clifford Brown, then by Lee Morgan and Freddie Hubbard. To some extent this results from an overemphasis by listeners on instrumental technique, but the idea that Dorham didn't have chops-a-plenty is nonsensical, as a listen to his crisp delivery on the double time passages as heard herein, a previously unreleased 1967 live recording, shows. More importantly, he had his own way of doing things, and the ability to really create spontaneous melody.

Blue Bossa In The Bronx, more than two years after his last studio date as leader (the brilliant *Trompeta Toccata* on Blue Note) and five years before his 1972 death, stands as a worthy coda to a great recording career, which we commemorate this month, one year after the trumpeter's centennial. Here Dorham is joined by Sonny Red (alto), Cedar Walton (piano), Paul Chambers (bass) and Denis Charles (drums). The Virgin Islands native Charles was known for his association with free jazz figures, but his deep Caribbean roots were always evident. It is certainly interesting to hear his take on bop accenting here in Charlie Parker's "Confirmation". Chambers and Walton had both recorded with Dorham several times previously, and they are in fine form, both as soloists and accompanists. The only other recorded encounter of Dorham with Red was from the Half Note (also with Walton) in early 1966. Listeners who know that record should know that this new release is better in every way. Red is an interesting, if somewhat inconsistent soloist, with a personal tone and original ideas. But it is Dorham who really grabs the attention. He may have lost his Blue Note contract but he had lost nothing else. The flow of ideas and personal sense of phrasing were as finely-tuned as ever, and this amazingly clear recording captures his burnished tone nicely, with four of the album's seven selections pushing past the 13-minute mark—including "Blue Bossa", "Bag's Groove" [sic], "Blue Friday" and the aforementioned "Confirmation".

For more info visit resonancerecords.org

BOXED SET



The Complete Palm Recordings 1973-1974
Byard Lancaster (Palm-Souffle Continu)
by Bill Meyer

The association of Byard Lancaster (1942-2012) with the Paris-based label PALM (Productions Artistiques Littéraires et Musicales) was brief, but significant. Between Nov. 1973 and Dec. 1974, the multi-instrumentalist (whose 83rd birthday and 13-year deathaversary fall on this month of August) recorded four albums, here released as *The Complete Palm Recordings*, which showcased a musical conception that spanned, in the artist's words, "from *A Love Supreme* to *Sex Machine*." This dynamic wasn't a matter of an established commercial entity betting resources on a commercial property, but of one independent musical figure collaborating with another, Parisian musician-producer-engineer Jef Gilson, to make a cohesive artistic statement.

Free jazz, which was never pecunious, had hit a commercial wall by the mid '70s. In New York, where Lancaster had worked with drummer Sunny Murray and saxophonist-bass clarinetist Marzette Watts, and in his home town of Philadelphia, gigs were scarce and scarcely compensatory. He had already tried self-production with Dogtown Records before leaving Philadelphia in the fall of 1973, hoping to find better opportunities in Paris, where he had previously played with Murray. But while the city had been a center of political and musical revolutionary action then, in 1973 it was going through its own recession-induced doldrums. Nonetheless, Gilson chose this time to start his label, PALM, with the intent to only make records that were artistically necessary; he produced, recorded and played on many of its releases—and he and Lancaster quickly hatched a plan: they would present not only the saxophonist's freer playing, which had already been presented on records with Murray, Watts, Burton Greene and Bill Dixon, among others, but the greater breadth of his interests.

The PALM studio was a repurposed movie theater. Gilson first recorded Lancaster there on Nov. 24, 1973. That session yielded *Us*, an unusually configured LP + 45 rpm single whose contents established the project's stylistic boundaries. Lancaster, playing flute, alto (his main instruments) and tenor saxophones, was accompanied by Malagasy Sylvain Marc (electric bass) and American Steve McCall (drums). The album contains three dynamic, contrasting performances, each of which demonstrates Lancaster's combination of strong historical/structural logic and emotional presence. "Mc Call All" begins with a propulsive drum solo, which establishes an energy level and sense of space that the trio sustains throughout. The leader joins in with piercing alto cries, then brings things down a notch, concentrating on quick, darting phrases. McCall does yeoman's work, simultaneously setting the pace with elastic rhythms and echoing Murray's pure-sound cymbal playing. The oddity of Marc's burping tone diminishes as he establishes a presence that is both conversational and driving. Lancaster switches to flute for "Flore", waxing alternately solemn and raw while McCall's slow rolls

underscore the music's dignity. The session closes with "John", an unaccompanied tenor piece that explores choppy phrases and emphatic cries in the horn's altissimo registers. The accompanying single, while recorded with the same personnel on the same day, sounds quite different. On the album title track and "Just Test", Lancaster is deep in the electric bassist's pocket, asserting an affiliation to funk.

By the end of 1974, PALM had issued three Lancaster titles co-credited to Lancaster and the other participants. Each elaborated upon some aspect of *Us*. In February, he led a quintet comprising Jean-François Catoire (bass), Jonathan Dickinson (drums), Keno Speller (percussion) and the youthful Texan, Clint Jackson II (trumpet), whom Gilson found busking on the streets of Paris. The two side-long tracks they recorded for *Mother Africa* reveal Gilson's shaping influence. Catoire's bass is unusually high in the mix for a jazz record made in 1974, and some of the ensemble's studio banter made it onto the recording. These interventions confer a sense that you're hearing something that was consciously made, not merely played, while still acknowledging the freedom of the playing. Jackson is great throughout, and Lancaster complements him astutely when not soloing. The album can be heard as the saxophonist's take on John Coltrane's West Coast adventures from 1965 and Pharoah Sanders' long-form, percussion-heavy work.

While Lancaster shares credit for the double album *Exactement* with Speller, it's a mostly solitary affair. Speller appears on a pair of flute-conga duets that distill the previous album's African dreaming to a loping, celebratory essence. For the other six tracks, Lancaster switches between soprano and alto saxophones, flute, bass clarinet and piano. By the mid '70s, solo horn albums were still pretty thin on the ground (asides from Anthony Braxton, Roscoe Mitchell, Evan Parker, Steve Lacy and Lee Konitz), but it's the focus and individuality of each instrumental statement here, not their novelty, that compels. On "Sweet Evil Miss", Kisianga fairly bathes in piano resonance, inhabiting a space midway between Alice Coltrane and Charlemagne Palestine. Lancaster's pointed flute phrases on "Virginia" articulate complicated shifts in mood and attack. His electronically doubled alto manages to sound spacy, but not particularly Sun R-related on "Dr. Oliver Lancaster". Both the bass clarinet showcase "Palm Sunday" and the darting soprano feature on "Providence Baptist Church" invoke early personal memories. *Exactement* is a strong statement of individual ability and spiritual intent.

PALM's advertisements at the end of 1974 promised the release of a full-band R&B record in the new year, but *Funny Funky Rib Crib* didn't turn up for another five, by which time Gilson had sold PALM. It opens with "Just Test", the B-side of the *Us* 7", but the rest of the record splits into two modes. "Dogtown" and "Rib Crib" (the latter which appears in two 9+ minute renditions) are punchy vamps that affirm Lancaster's devotion to James Brown. When the performances frame a soloist, it's galvanizing, but overlong passages of monochromatic riffing test patience. On two other tunes, he croons to mixed effect with competent delivery, but nowhere near as distinguished as his instrumental work: the best thing one can say about his lyrics is that they are sincere. Perhaps if he had stayed in Paris a bit longer, Lancaster could have come up with additional material in this vein and addressed such shortcomings. As it stands, *Funny Funky Rib Crib* unfortunately ends a great run on a flat note.

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