



Jazz Mood
(Savoy-Craft Recordings)
Golden Flower: Live in Sweden (Elemental Music)
Yusef Lateef
by Marc Medwin

“Under the microscope this afternoon will be the musical mind,” stated multi-instrumentalist Yusef Lateef (who passed away 12 years ago this month at age 93), from a 1969 radio broadcast of his works. And what a musical mind it was! He described his work as “autophysiopsychic music,” which he defined as music originating from one’s physical, mental and spiritual self, as well as from the heart. From twelve-tone music to world sounds and deep into the blues, Lateef could and did play whatever his muse presented. These two albums, ranging in time from 1957, 1967 and 1972, reintroduce a rare catalog entry and proffer newly released live and studio recordings examining that mind, hands and heart in action.

Jazz Mood was Lateef’s debut album as leader (released on Savoy and recently reissued on 180g vinyl), and though it was far from the only music he waxed in 1957, it’s some of the most important. To hear the gentle giant laying the groundwork for his very long career, look no further than “Metaphor”. Lateef travels the timbre spectrum, moving from argol (an Arabic, double-pipe, single-reed woodwind instrument) to flute as the tune switches from stark

modality to lush swing, with Curtis Fuller (trombone) and Hugh Lawson (piano) painting velvety harmonic portraits beneath. Ernie Farrow (bass) and Louis Hayes (drums) hold down the hard bop fort of “Yusef’s Mood” and the liminal challenges of “Blues in Space”. The restoration of this new vinyl and digital edition makes the music leap from the speakers and is now the one to have.

Fast-forward 15 years and “Yusef’s Mood” gets an even higher-energy 20-minute workout in a concert performance from the Åhus Jazz Festival, concluding the double set of beautifully captured, previously unreleased studio and concert recordings found in *Golden Flower: Live in Sweden* (available as a limited edition, 180g double-LP set or as a deluxe 2-CD package). The first session on the album was recorded on September 13, 1967, in Mosebacke, Stockholm, and the second, a quartet outing, was recorded live at the Swedish festival on August 1, 1972. We are now spoiled for choice, as this version is even longer than the one from the same group on *Atlantis Lullaby* (released last year, also by Elemental Music). Kenny Barron (piano) rocks the keys on an extended solo demonstrating the hot freedom so recently accepted into the jazz vocabulary, and he’s ably abetted by Bob Cunningham (bass) and Albert “Tootie” Heath (drums), the latter being the only member to grace both sets, keeping the fire burning. A bit of New Orleans revival spirit turns “Yusef’s Mood” at 12:55 and just beyond into a particularly poignant passage. An achingly nostalgic “Lowland Lullaby” affords the leader a chance to stretch out, accompanied only but sympathetically by Cunningham. If Lateef’s wistful solo flute take on “The Poor Fisherman” doesn’t tug the heart-strings, nothing will. Similarly introspective spaces open for “The Golden Flute”, expertly accompanied by Lars Sjösten

(piano) and the legendary Palle Danielsson (bass), the latter who passed away last year at age 77.

Through both albums, Lateef’s soulfulness is on full display, his vocabularies intersecting at the boundaries that blur and disappear to such revelatory effect. Every blue note, sustained pitch and every courteous announcement demonstrate his commitment to the histories and cultures he touches and are touched by him. It is a pleasure, via these two albums, to explore his mind and revel in the sonic universes it creates.

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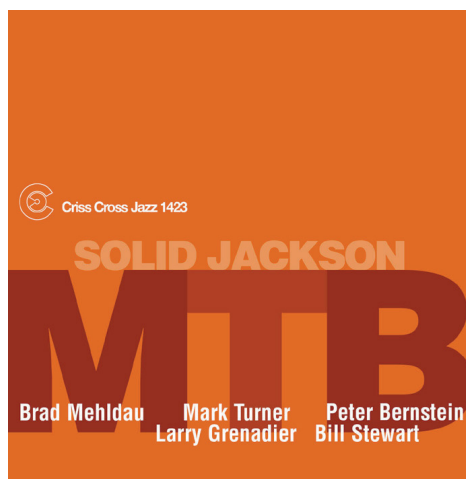
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