



Enduring Sonance
Steve Wilson (Smoke Sessions)
by Scott Yanow

Steve Wilson, who has appeared on over 200 albums as a sideman and has now led ten of his own, is certainly a very reliable musician. Since his earliest recordings (including on drummer Ralph Peterson's 1988 Blue Note album *V*), his alto and soprano playing has uplifted the music of numerous ensembles. For *Enduring Sonance* (available as an LP, CD or digital download), Wilson put together an all-star group: Joe Locke (vibraphone), Renee Rosnes (piano, Fender Rhodes), Jay Anderson (bass) and Kendrick Scott (drums), with Kevin Newton (French horn) utilized on the opening ("Quiet Girl") and closing ("Francisco") numbers. The original idea behind the project was that it was going to be a ballad album featuring some of the leader's favorite songs. While the latter is still true and there are some ballads, Wilson eventually decided to vary both tempo and mood. The eight songs include some that the saxophonist has enjoyed since he was growing up in the '70s, but this is by no stretch a Great American Songbook set: other than "Pieces of Dreams", none of these tunes would be considered standards, although several deserve to be.

This album of thoughtful modern jazz consists of concise performances, particularly with the featured solos of Wilson, Rosnes and Locke being relatively brief and to the point. Opener is Billy Childs' "Quiet Girl", which, with the leader's soprano up front, has the group sounding a bit like Weather Report. George Cables' "Helen's Song" has a catchy yet sophisticated theme. "Pieces of Dreams", taken at a very slow tempo, sticks close to the classic melody. In contrast, Bill Lee's "How Long", a spiritual piece in the vein of John Coltrane, has a dramatic beginning and showcases Wilson's powerful alto playing. Eliane Elias' "A Volta" has an energetic groove and includes a stirring soprano/vibraphone tradeoff. Quincy Jones' "The Eyes of Love" slows the tempo way down with Wilson giving the melody an emotional reading. Gino Vannelli's "The Surest Thing Can Change" is a medium-tempo strut with a spotlight for the leader (on soprano), who reveals his playing to be dynamically both assertive and calm. The program concludes with Milton Nascimento's quietly introspective treatment of "Francisco".

Enduring Sonance means consistently high-quality sound. Substitute "playing" for "sound" and that description fits not only this worthy album but Steve Wilson's career.

For more info visit smokesessionsrecords.com. The album release concert is at Smoke Apr. 29-May 3. See Calendar.



Geneva 2007 (Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series Vol. 51)
Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band (TCB)
by Marilyn Lester

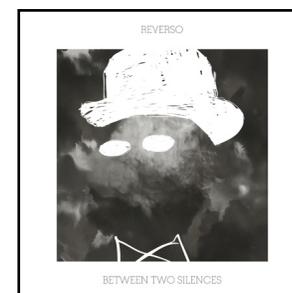
It wasn't long after Dizzy Gillespie passed in 1993 that the Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band was formed by Gillespie's longtime bassist, John Lee. The group has been playing and touring since, and although attrition has diminished utilizing Gillespie alums, the mission of legacy remains through varying iterations. (The current Dizzy Gillespie All-Stars ensemble, a sextet, is led by musical director/bassist Lee, plus trumpeter Freddie Hendrix, saxophonist Don Braden, pianist Alex Collins, percussionist Roger Squitiero and drummer John Sturino.) But in May 2007 at Victoria-Hall, Geneva, a true 18-piece big band recorded some of Dizzy's best-known music (four of the nine selections are by the band's namesake).

Geneva 2007 is the 51st volume of the Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series, which documents historic and contemporary jazz performances broadcasted by Swiss radio. On that date, the term "all-star" rang brilliantly true. Among the players: Lee leading, with Slide Hampton (trombone, conductor), James Moody (tenor), Claudio Roditi and Roy Hargrove (trumpets) plus Roberta Gambarini (vocals). Then, as today, the ethos was to maintain historical "accuracy," but through the lens of fresh playing. On a burner of Gillespie's "Blue 'n Boogie", Gambarini is a wildcat of scat, joined by fellow scatter Moody plus Hargrove, who gets a generous feature. She offers well-placed vocalizations on Jimmy Heath's "Moody's Groove", but it's Moody's tune to shine on. The longest cut (at almost 13 minutes) is the well-known Thelonious Monk classic, "Round Midnight", featuring Antonio Hart (alto), Greg Gisbert (trumpet) and Roy Assaf (piano). The ensemble eases into the tune with a laid-back languor, calling up a sustained image of a smoky club in the wee hours, giving wide space to its soloists. Paying homage to the Afro-Cuban flavor of Gillespie's marvelous

"Manteca", nine of the players take solos over the nearly ten minutes of the track. Dennis Mackrel (drums) has his own tasty feature and holds the beat mightily for trumpeters Frank Greene, Gisbert, Hargrove and Roditi, Douglas Purviance (bass trombone), Andres Boiarsky (tenor) and Lee (electric bass). Equally satisfying are "Hot House", "Con Alma", "Dizzy's Business", "Without You No Me" and "Things To Come".

While a listener might wish for the days of Dizzy himself, this polished group of true all-stars offers a hugely exciting trad big-band performance.

For more info visit tcbrecords.bandcamp.com. Dizzy Gillespie All-Stars are at Blue Note Apr. 27. See Calendar.



Between Two Silences
Reverso (Ryan Keberle, Frank Woeste,
Vincent Courtois) (Alternate Side)
by Josh Gagnon

During Reverso's recent night at Mezzrow, trombonist Ryan Keberle spoke on the influence that composer-ironoclast Erik Satie (1866-1925) had on the impressionists, jazz musicians and the creative world at large, particularly the bridge between Satie and Maurice Ravel and the compositional collective Les Six, which have been inspirations behind Reverso's previous work. It therefore seems logical, that for their sixth album, *Between Two Silences*, Reverso—the genre-bending trio of Keberle, Frank Woeste (piano) and Vincent Courtois (cello)—would again find a footing in the work of Satie.

In keeping with Reverso's past template, the compositions contributed on the album by each member reflect an aspect of Satie's music and influence rather than simply "jazzing" up existing works. The resulting eleven tracks from their new album create a compelling and stylistically distinct microcosm that lies apart from much of contemporary jazz and classical music. This stylistic space between the two, perhaps "Third Stream" à la Gunther Schuller, requires a musical skillset few possess and which Reverso displays across the recording.

The specific instrumentation of piano with the tenor-register pair of trombone and cello lends itself to each player occupying a variety of roles. In an instant, any of the three could function as the melodic voice, harmonic accompanist, bassist or percussionist. A notable example is Courtois' playing on his composition "Désespoir agréable", which over the course of an improvised build in energy, subtly morphs from a pseudo-fugal accompaniment to an uptempo walking bass line with Keberle improvising over the top. Despite their substantial individual roles throughout, the three also have an uncanny ability to sound like one massive instrument in moments such as the dramatic final minute of Woeste's "Café des fantômes mélancoliques".

A hat must also be tipped to the group's production choices and the engineering work of Erwan Boulay. The tasteful layering of instruments and use of reverb works to great effect. On "Danse des horloges sans aiguilles", particularly, the addition of multi-tracked trombone adds a dynamic reinforcement to the texture, creating a memorable climactic moment early in the album. This creative work in the studio draws even more out of an album that is a great listen.

For more info visit ryankeberle.com. Ryan Keberle is at Instituto Cervoantes New York Apr. 30 (with Catharsis Trio). See Calendar.

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