

# record

## REVIEWS

### THE ALBERT

THE ALBERT—Perception PLP 9: *Pity The Child; Things Ain't Easy; Cold 'n' Hard; Been So Good (For So Long)*/prelude, main theme; *Misery*/prelude, main theme; *Let It Fall*.

Personnel: Jay Silva, Richard Meisterman, trumpets; Jon Huston, trombone, trumpet; Michael Gibson, trombone; Frank Vicari, tenor saxophone; Howard Wyeth, organ, piano; William Chelf, piano (track 3 only); Paul Dickler, guitar; Paul Petrucelli, bass; Barry Lazarowitz, drums; Otis Smith, vocals, congas.

Rating: ★★ ★ 1/2

Trends. Followers. Is it possible for a group to be musically valid while being the latter to the former? If so, it's all predicated upon the trend itself being valid. And jazz-rock, big-band rock, fusion or free-form rock seems to be in favor these days—if only as a vast improvement over their predecessors in the cash register realm of American music.

So perhaps it's proper to ask whether or not there would be The Albert if Mariachi Oud Bands were the rage. Chances are there would not. But as long as jugglers and magicians need not justify their professional existences I'll gladly let musicians off the hook. Especially The Albert, for they have utilized The Trend only as a jumping-off point and have turned their back to hit-making, bubblegum formulae.

All this serves as a prelude to my introductory description of this unheralded new group, and that is: Happiness is an adventurous yet tasteful group which I refuse to categorize that features Frank Vicari.

Though not as exciting as Chase nor as glibly and tightly arranged and programmed as others in the twilight zone between pure jazz and pure rock, The Albert has, if anything, a fragile personality all its own that could magnetize if the zeitgeist were to become truly quality-oriented. The group employs brass chorales, soft rock, churchy organ (more Gregorian chantish than greasy gospel), space, soulful but restrained vocals, and hard jazz spots handled mainly by Vicari. The former Maynard Ferguson (1963-65) and Woody Herman (three tenures as lead tenorist since October, 1965) sideman dominates the album with his authoritative, uncluttered, and above all sensitive improvisations.

Vicari debuts on *Cold*, which contains a gassy organ intro and good horn writing throughout. The tenorist steps out with a solo more multi-noted than is his wont but some of the groovy characteristics of his style (pithy phrases beginning on an A-natural above high C and staccato-legato phrasing that communicates, to name a few) emerge and conquer.

*Been So Good*, marred only by quasi-symphonic brass pretension (one of the group's recurring weaknesses), is about the best track. Vicari delivers his longest

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Reviews are signed by the writers.

Ratings are: ★★★★★ excellent, ★★★★ very good, ★★★ good, ★★ fair, ★ poor.

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solo and most effective is the exposed portion (the longest) in which he reworks nearly identical phrases and improves them with an energy and purpose not often witnessed. His only accompaniment during the tour de force segment is hand-clapping, and Vicari transcends this distraction and converts it to his favor as only an expert improviser can.

The Albert's charts (by Huston, Wyeth, and Gibson) are fragmented but to a delightful end—there's breathing room and a sense of suspension; in other words, cognac instead of grape soda and pretzels. The ensemble is not always together, the intonation is sometimes painful and it seems that the wrong trumpet player is playing lead or his chops were down on the date (or worn by repeated takes). The rhythm section is near-perfect for the group's conception and vocalist Smith (who doubles congas) delivers his messages with admirable control. Though the group may have had adequate rehearsal for this date, I sense that an important prerequisite for a boss result—hard, steady playing on actual gigs—has not been experienced. Since no recording dates (or background info) appear, how much of a barometer of current Albert this LP is is unknown. (The group, with all of the above personnel except Vicari, backed James Moody on his recent LP on the same label, *The Teachers*, PLP 6, released shortly before this album.)

The Albert did not knock me cold, in the final analysis, but I'm on the ropes and I urge one and all to check out this embryonic first recording. Furthermore, I'll pay any price for their next offering—especially if Frank Vicari is on it.

—Szantor

### DIZZY GILLESPIE

REUNION BIG BAND—MPS 15 207: *Things To Come; One Bass Hit; Frisco; Con Alma; The Things Are Here; Theme (Birks' Works)*.

Personnel: Gillespie, Victor Paz, Jimmy Owens, Dizzy Reece, Stu Hamer, trumpets; Curtis Fuller, Tom McIntosh, Ted Kelly, trombones; Chris Woods, alto saxophone; James Moody, tenor saxophone, flute; Paul Jeffrey, tenor saxophone; Sahib Shihab, Cecil Payne, baritone saxophones; Mike Longo, piano; Paul West, bass; Candy Finch, drums.

Rating: ★★★★★

Recorded in Berlin in the fall of 1968, this LP captures the big band assembled especially for Dizzy's European tour of that year. By the time it hit in Berlin, the band had played concerts in seven countries and achieved the cohesion of a regular outfit. A pity it had to disband after the tour.

The two opening numbers are from the repertoire of the great 1946-50 Gillespie band (of which Kelly, Moody and Payne were members). The unique sound and

spirit of the memorable organization are remarkably well recaptured, especially in the broiling *Things To Come*. The work of the trumpet section, inspired by the leader's stratospheric flights, is something to hear, and Gil Fuller's vintage arrangement stands the test of time—no big band has ever sounded more "modern".

*The Things Are Here* is a reworking of the same material, played inside out. It features "free" duo improvisations by Diz and Owens, Woods and Moody, Fuller and McIntosh (or Kelly?), and Shihab and Payne, perhaps a mite too short but exciting, and makes for a fitting climax.

Between those two steamrollers plenty of meat is sandwiched. Paul West, a capable bassist, is no match for Ray Brown in *One Bass Hit*, but Dizzy and the caloric trumpets sizzle. Mike Longo's *Frisco*, from Dizzy's contemporary small-group repertoire, is highlighted by a Moody flute solo, plus pleasant contributions by the composer and the leader.

*Con Alma*, the sole ballad, has prime Dizzy and an interesting alto solo by Woods, reminiscent of Eric Dolphy. Jeffrey, I believe, is responsible for the tenor spot in *Things To Come*, strongly flavored by middle Coltrane. Otherwise, this is not a soloists' band (one could have wished for more Moody, Fuller, and Owens), but with Dizzy taking care of business, why worry?

The sound is as good a live big-band one as you're likely to hear on record, with beautifully clear highs and excellent balance. Finch reveals himself to be a first-class big band drummer (with that characteristic Chinese cymbal sound required by the leader), and the sax section, anchored in two strong baritones, has an unusual dark color. The trumpets, however, are it. I believe it's Paz in the lead chair.

If the big bands ever do come back in force, and it becomes feasible for Dizzy to lead one permanently, it will be something to hear. Meanwhile, this is a nice keepsake for Stateside listeners who never got to hear this bunch in person. —Morgenstern

### WOODY HERMAN

WOODY—Cadet LPS-845: *Blues in the Night; A Time For Love; Smiling Phases; Saccharine Sally; How Can I Be Sure; A Stone Called Person*.

Personnel: Rigby Powell, Forrest Buchtel, Tony Klatka, Tom Harrell, Bill Byrne, trumpets; Ira Nepus, Curt Berg, Luten Taylor, trombones; Frank Tiberi, Steve Lederer, Sal Nistico, tenor saxophones; Jim Thomas, baritone saxophone; Alan Broadbent, acoustic and electric piano; Mike Goodrick, guitar; Tom Azarello, electric bass; Evan Diner, drums.

No Rating

Woody Herman recorded for Cadet in Chicago last July 29-30. I attended both