

PERCEPTION TODAY JAZZ



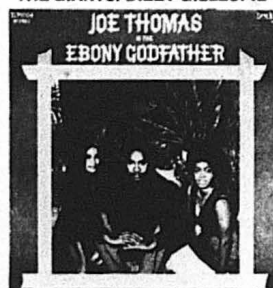
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complement each other nicely.

One small complaint: the liner notes are identical. That's economy with a capital "E"!

—porter

MITCHELL-RUFF DUO

STRAYHORN—Mainstream 335: *Take the "A" Train; Passion Flower; Suite for the Duo; Chelsea Bridge; Upper Manhattan Medical Group; Rain Check; Lush Life.*

Personnel: Dwiki Mitchell, piano; Willie Ruff, French horn, bass.

Rating: ★★½

It's been more than 15 years now that this duo has been among us. Mitchell plays big conservatory style piano, rambling through all sorts of reminiscences from Tatum through Powell and Waller, and basically is concerned with the piano as an instrument rather than a jazz voice. He still has a habit of enthusiastically over-pedaling from time to time, but does execute things in fleet fashion.

Ruff specializes in confusing the customers, switching from bass to French horn as the tempo strikes him. On these two sides you will have to search for a bass passage.

Essentially, the album is straightforward presentation of Strayhorn material done in song style, from a 78-type treatment of *Rain Check* to six-and-a-half minutes of *Lush Life*.

The *Suite*, a 12-minute work written by Strayhorn for the Duo, is in four parts. The opening section has a mournful moose call for Ruff built on an augmented ninth, the kind of thing Juan Tizol used to play in the '40s period of the Ellington band. The piano has a florid blues-based section, following which Ruff plays a brief spiritual-tinged passage, sounding like Dvorak crossed with *Come Sunday*. The closing section permits Mitchell to romp all over the keyboard while Ruff does a dapper lead.

Again, this is concert-song rather than concert-jazz style, with a lot of the material done in a surprisingly constrained mold. —levin

BUDDY TERRY

AWARENESS—Mainstream 336: *Awareness Suite (Omnipotence, Babylon, Unity, Humility); Kamill; Stealin' Gold; Sodom and Gomorrah; Ab-scretions.*

Personnel: Cecil Bridgewater, trumpet, percussion; Terry, tenor & soprano saxes, flute, percussion; Stanley Cowell, piano; electric piano; Roland Prince, guitar; Buster Williams, Victor Gaskin, bass; electric bass; Mickey Roker, drums; Mtume, congas.

Rating: ★★★½

Buddy Terry can play. He has an impressive list of past associations, but this recording shows a different direction than his earlier work. He has chosen a contemporary setting for his session and I think he loses some of his personality because of it. Tenor players who work in this vein seem to get hung up on Coltrane, and Terry has shown more than that in more conventional settings.

The best thing in the album is the 12-minute *Sodom* which contains good work by the leader, sparkling Cowell and a really great solo by Bridgewater. The suite is rather pretentious.

The guitar and second bass are superfluous, and thus the rhythm section often seems cluttered. Still, the album is better than most in this idiom and rates an extra half star for Bridgewater, an outstanding young player.

—porter

TONY WILLIAMS

EGO—Polydor 24-4065: *Clap City; There Comes A Time; Pislow's Filigree; Circa 45; Two Worlds; Some Hip Drum Shit; Lonesome Wells; Mom and Dad; The Urchins of Sermese.*

Personnel: Khalid Yasin, organ; Ted Dunbar, guitar; Ron Carter, bass, cello; Don Alias, percussion; Warren Smith, percussion; Williams, vocal.

Rating: ★★½

This album asks the question: Can a premier percussionist from Boston make it as a singer? The answer is an emphatic NO!!

The two-and-a-half stars are for Yasin, Carter, Dunbar, Alias and Smith who at least make a gallant attempt. Also *Clap City*, the all-too-short Ghanaian ensemble, and *Hip Drum* are interesting. —Cole

Rating: ★★★★★

Tony Williams is into his own thing. It may not appeal to that segment of the jazz audience which has closed its ears to rock, but it is valid contemporary music with a wide range of moods. And for percussion freaks, it's a must.

In organist Yasin, Williams has one of the masters of that oft-maligned instrument, and guitarist Dunbar is a worthy replacement for John McLaughlin—not as flashy, perhaps, but very tasty and soulful.

Williams wrote and arranged all the pieces on the album. He sings on *Time, Worlds*, and *Wells* only, and while he may not be a great vocalist, he gets a warm, sincere feeling. There's also room for a lot of instrumental activity on these three tracks. *Wells* shows a late-Beatles influence, but *Worlds* is quite original in conception.

In Smith and Alias, the leader has the company of peers. Smith handles the tympani, marimba, shaker, and other miscellaneous percussion in masterly fashion, while Alias bears down on congas. Combined with Williams' jazz drum kit, this adds up to a heavy percussion party, and the two short tracks that open each side (*Clap* and *Shit*) are performed by this trio only. They are also prominently featured on *Filigree* and *Worlds*.

Urchins is a blowing track, while *Mom and Dad* is a very warm, pretty mood piece. Yasin and Dunbar shine on both. There is a nice attention to dynamics throughout; the group never descends to the sound-for-sounds sake level that mars so much rock music.

Not for purists on either side of the musical fence, this album is recommended to open-minded listeners—and, of course, drum fanatics. I found it most likeable. —morganstern

old wine - new bottles

Lionel Hampton, *Vol. 1: Stompology* (RCA LPV 575)

★★★★★

Hot Lips Page, *Feelin' High and Happy* (RCA LPV 576)

★★★★★

Various Artists: *Swing, Vol. 1* (RCA LPV 578)

★★★★★

This Is Duke Ellington (RCA VPM 6042)

★★½