

swinging fashion. Although three different guitarists and two drummers play, the main star throughout is organist Tony Monaco.

Monaco, who has carved out his own musical identity from the dominant style of Jimmy Smith, comes up with consistently inventive solos throughout all of these selections. Despite the similarity of the tunes and their treatments, Monaco's playing keeps the music from becoming monotonous or overly predictable. Also helping out is the booting tenor of Gene Walker on six selections, three of which feature the spirited goodtime singing of Willie Poocho.

In addition to the ten selections on these new sessions, a "bonus" cut is the inclusion of the ten-minute "Takin' My Time Blues" which was previously on Monaco's 2002 CD *Intimately Live At The 501*. It features Monaco, Kraut, and Tsamons on yet another fun swinging Blues.

Scott Yanow

1) (JOE & PAUL) MIDIRI BROTHERS, TREES, MIDI 6.

Let's Go / Every Evening / September Song / Oodles of Noodles / I Hear As In A Dream / Trees / Twelfth Street Rag / April Kisses / Roses of Picardy / Daydream / Jitterbug Waltz / Fascinating Rhythm. 61:19.

J. Midiri, rds; P. Midiri, vib, marimba, tbn; Pat Mercuri, g; Dan Tobias, tp; Gary Cattley, b, tba; Jim Lawlor, d. Tracks 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8: 3/3/04, Venice, FL; tracks 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12: 5/04, location unknown; track 13: 7/03, Connecticut.

2) BLUE SKY 5, TIN GOOSE JUMP, GROOVE JUICE 1947-01.

At Sixes and Sevens / Sorry, No Answers Today / Nice Work If You Can Get It / I Won't Be Hangin' Around / Droppin' In At Donna's Place / Saying You'll Be Mine / Undecided / Turret Top Boogie / What A Thing to Say / They All Laughed / Embryo / How Are You Sleeping These Days? / Sweet Eileen / Never in My Wildest Dreams / Tin Goose Jump. 52:15.

Craig Gildner, ldr, p, vcl, g; Brett Lemley, tpt; Tommy Greco, ts; Glen Oliff, b; James Peachey, d; Halley Schoenberg, cl, ten; Cassie Miller, vcl. 11/1, 11/2, 11/9/03/19-11/04, College Park, MD.

3) NICK TOUNTAS, HOPALONG, NICK TOUNTAS 3945.

It's You Or Else / How Insensitive / Gone / Be My Love / Balkan Dance / Song for Lucy / Hopalong / The Raven / Itapoa / For Toula / Back Home This Summer. 76:31.

Tountas, b; Zvonimir Tot, g; Rusty Jones, d; Larry Novak, p ("Itapoa" only). 2/10, 2/18/03, Morton Grove, IL.

4) LENNY SOLOMON, TRANSPARENCY, LENNY SOLOMON, no#.

Oh Susannah / Leila's Waltz / Hoe Down / Transparency / Don't Tell Me What To Do? / The Reel Thing / Sweet Georgia Brown / Black Satin / Calgary Stampede / Wild Dog / I Got Rhythm / The Nearness of You / Paganini Blues. 51:31.

Solomon, vin; Pat Collins, b; Geoff Young, g; Phil Dwyer, p; Barry Romberg, d; Wendy Solomon, cello. Date not specified, Lydian Sound, Toronto, Canada.

Here are four variations on the theme of Jazz "traditionalism," broadly defined, with vary-

ing results. All are self-produced CDs, which is sad but not surprising commentary on the current economic situation of Jazz. (1) is another pleasing recording by the Midiri brothers, who take their inspiration from the best work of the 1935-45 Goodman small bands, with inspiring results. The disc is animated throughout by enthusiastic yet thoughtful playing that avoids clichés but is thoroughly in the idiom. What is especially pleasing about this disc is its breadth of repertoire—it takes a Sisyphean effort to make "Stealin' Apples," for one example, climb that hill again—so to hear songs that reflect back to Ray Charles, Eddie Lang (in Mercuri's lovely solo version of "April Kisses"), Jimmy Dorsey, Jimmy Noone, Georges Bizet, and others is a rare pleasure. This sextet isn't afraid to play beautiful melodies reverentially (listen closely to trumpeter Tobias's solo on the title song), and they know the value of a simple, unadorned, charging 4/4 swing. May their enterprises prosper.

It pains me to be uncomplimentary about someone's self-produced CD, but the best I can say of (2) is that it is competent but unimaginative. The Blue Sky 5 has put a great deal of thought into visual production: the handsome band is well-dressed in period fashion, and they have borrowed a beautiful vintage Tucker automobile for their CD. However, the music doesn't live up to the packaging. It seems a continuation of the brief and ultimately shallow Swing Dance explosion of a few years ago—an odd cultural moment that enabled a number of bands to pretend that they were made up of improvising Jazz musicians (when in fact most of their members could neither construct nor reproduce a plausibly idiomatic sixteen-bar solo) and to whoop up a good deal of noisily enthusiastic near-music, calling itself Swing but more akin to rudimentary Rhythm and Blues. Few Jazz musicians benefited from this brief aberration, I think, and it seems to have abated. Blue Sky 5 is earnest but their originals are hardly memorable: their attempts at Fifties hip (or perhaps their goal is Forties hip? It is difficult to tell) are held back by simple melodies and banal lyrics that rhyme "female" and "email" while embracing lyric clichés. The ensemble playing is anything but amateurish but the soloing is neither idiomatic nor memorable. And when the band essays the classics of the period, their attempts can only make one think of many better versions. Nothing is offensive on the disc, and I am sure that they would please audiences in person, but nothing stays in the listener's ear once each performance is over.

(3) is much better: all three of these players (with one guest spot for pianist Novak) are as far from synthetic as it is possible to be. This is elegantly-played, spacious improvising that harks back to early George Benson and, at points, to the magical recordings that Lucky Thompson did with Oscar Pettiford and Skeeter Best. Tountas and Tot are very good soloists and ensemble players, and Jones's drumming is steady and never intrusive. Not all of the originals by Tountas