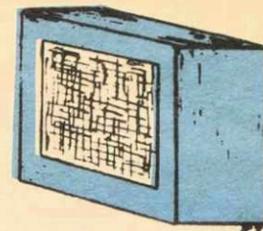


DÉJÀ



ENTENDU



by Hutch

Two interesting new goodies for you this week: 1. Inner City Blues — Grover Washington Jr. (Kuder); 2. "California 99" by Jimmie Haskell & Various Artists (ABC).

The first is a very interesting jazz LP, with Grover Washington Jr. doing most of the work on alto and tenor sax. When he works it's a pleasure for you. Two of the selections are Motown numbers written by Marvin Gaye. Although Gaye does a good job on "Inner City Blues" and "Mercy Mercy Me — The Economy"

Washington's instrumental versions far outshine those when you want straight toe-tapping soul. The drums and guitar are done very skillfully, and that sax is on a much higher musical scale than Junior Walker's straight funk.

Grover's not alone on this LP — over the six cuts he uses 26 other artists including Bob James on electric piano, Ron Carter on bass, Eric Cale on the oh-so-great guitar, Eugene Young on Flugelhorn, Thad Jones on French Horn, Harry Katzman on violin, Charles McCracken on cello, and four female vocalists. Even with that lineup the sax shines.

It's not really a big-band sound, although at times Grover sounds like Quincy Jones. It's a lot softer and less free-form than even Quincy who is not an abstract jazzman of note. Washington's jazz is two-o'clock in the morning music, if you know what I mean.

Side One is all instrumental and includes the two aforementioned cuts and a fresh version of "Georgia on my Mind". "Ain't No Sunshine Theme" from "Man and Boy" ("Better Days") starts off side two. The vocalists are used to taste — just enough to spice the mixture. The Brass backing people are used too (also with tact). Again guitar and sax excel. On this cut, we hear glimmerings of progressive jazz. The sax and piano go together near the end to anticlimax with a fadeout. It's too bad so much jazz on records fades out. Sometimes it really takes skill to stop an impromptu composition. I'd like to see that skill utilized.

A nice "Until it's Time For You to Go" blends into "I Love You Porgy". The sandwich method of blending comes as a surprise; i.e., the sax "meat" between two "slices" of trumpet (song intro and extro).

February 15th's "Billboard" lists this as no. 7 on the jazz charts, only slightly behind some pretty formidable artists — Quincy, Herbie Mann, and Miles Davis to name a few. Somebody obviously likes his stuff and I hope you will.

"CALIFORNIA 99" — JIMMIE HASKELL AND VARIOUS ARTISTS (ABC).

This weird LP needs some explanation. The promotional copies radio stations get contain two copies, one with songs and story, one with the songs only. Commercial copies contain both song and story so you don't get

ripped off.

Story? What story? Well, the whole LP is a science fiction story about what the United States will be like in 1999. There is a militaristic government ruling the States (the whole area being called California), and citizens will have a choice between working for the military; or live in peace, reproduce, and give up their children to the government. The promotional copy calls it a work in which symphonic, jazz, rock, and even Greek bouzouki music has been seamlessly welded together into one entity.

The first cut, "Overture", (written by Jimmie Haskell) was reminiscent of the "Tommie" overture. Good stuff! A synthesizer that is frequently used on this LP is first heard here.

Those who know Jimmie Witherspoon will weep as he sings "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down". It's a misuse of talent and a strain on his voice. "To Claudia on Thursday", featuring Denny Doherty (an N.S. product, formerly of the "Mamas and Papas") is a well executed number. A Moog intro and prelude starts side 2. Again it's solid stuff — nothing I can

complain about.

The singer of "Jessica" may sound familiar to James Gang fans. It should, it's Joe Walsh (also note: the whole LP is produced by Bill Szymczyk who produces the James Gang). Walsh also sings "California Fairytale". News (1999 rendition) is read over the music on this cut as is Simon and Garfunkel's "Seven o'clock News/ Silent Night" but more poorly done.

"Barbara", strings and all is beautiful music. It's all instrumental, a surprising and welcome change. The album may be considered a master-

piece by others but to me it just doesn't come off. Although the music is admittedly beautiful and varied, the story is weak. The script and person voicing are both lousy.

And therein lies the irony of this LP. In the copy you can buy you get music and story but I think the story ruins the music. In the promotional copy the story doesn't come through at all. The idea-men behind the LP tried to get the best of both worlds and instead they blew the whole thing.

You can form your own opinions on this LP. Until next week, keep in tune.

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