



Records... Funky Amigo

Miroslav Vitous Group (ECM)

It would be very easy to write this album off by declaring it to be another in a long line of ECM redundancy, just another Miroslav Vitous record. However it may be premature to think that everybody owns a few Vitous albums or have even heard his music.

For those familiar with the last Vitous album, *First Meeting*, this album will come as no surprise. It follows the same format as the last one except for more emphasis on somewhat loosely structured group improvisations. As usual, the Czech born bassist is joined by reedman John Surman, the hot young American pianist Kenny Kirkland and ECM's reliable veteran drummer Jon Christensen.

Vitous' bass playing is rather classically infused. This is especially evident on pieces in which he employs the bow such as the dirge-like "Eagle". However the group is also capable of playing some straight ahead jazz, with Vitous playing the lead part on "When face gets pale". Observant ECM fans will probably notice the extreme under-recording of Christensen's cymbals on this tune, not at all like the sound on the last hundred or so ECM recordings.

The group improvisations on this album are well done technically speaking but unfortunately they are lacking in any contrast. The eerie sound texture achieved by Vitous' bass and the wailing of Surman's reeds

seem to dominate the mood of the music.

Even if one considers this latest Vitous effort redundant, there are some beautiful moments such as the graceful "Sleeping Beauty" that are just too nice to not appreciate.

Hacker & Goldstein

Black Slate Amigo (Polygram/Vertigo)

Amigo by Black Slate is a professional and smooth operation, manufacturing reggae in good funk style. Electronically produced catcalls, whistles and screeches reverberate throughout, and combined with an exciting variety of rhythms, create an exotic stylish effect.

"They can't make us" really gets down, giving us the full effect of the dynamic rhythm section while "Amigo" has a relaxed beat which makes it easy to move your feet and shake your bod.

For an exciting display of spacey electronic effects, "Mind Your Motion" is a cut not to be missed. "Africans to Africa" and "Freedom Time" are ballads sung in a heartfelt lament, mourning the Black Man's unasked-for sojourn in the Western World.

Overall Black Slate's pulsating rhythms and ear-catching sound effects, however with the addition of their easy vocal styles and tight arrangements, *Amigo* becomes simply dynamite.

Paul Ellington

See 'Murray', Page 14.



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