

Detroit Jazz

Herb Boyd

1969

A few years ago, pre-moog synthesizer, and long before the dawning of the “age of aquarius,” Detroiters were known to cluster at the various points of departure in order to cheerfully bon voyage their young ambassadors of jazz, whose responsibility it was to saturate the land with sounds (pan-euphoniously?). Anyway, the story goes, they were supremely successful and with their talents garnered for their city a most enviable reputation...

The opening statement, despite the fable-like posture, is more the property of history than fantasy.

Should it appear cryptic, let it be understood, metaphorically, as suggestive of a golden age in jazz for Detroit. A period, some ten years ago now, in which every top jazz group in the country possessed at least one musician calling Detroit his home.

Well, that was ten years ago, and if your view of history is cyclical then it comes as no surprise to you—for suddenly, but with plenty warning, Detroit’s jazz pulse has quickened considerably.

And concerning this new awakening you can’t spoil with accolades the tremendous work of the Detroit Creative Musicians Association, the stick-and-stay dedication of Bud Spangler, Doug Hammond, Ted Irvin and Jack Springer.

Even some establishments can be singled out for their part in this recovery. And it would be myopic to overlook Edith at the Land of Hi Fi.

But if there’s one thing, one group, which deserves to stand a little longer in the spotlight, then it has to be the Contemporary Jazz Quintet.

With the introduction of their new record on the Blue Note label they have not only taken Detroit’s music scene before a national audience but have shown as well that there is reward to hard work and talent.

As a recording date might suggest, this is a well-rehearsed, well-polished performing unit. And if the names Charles Moore (trumpet), Kenny Cox (piano), Danny Spencer (drums), Ron Brooks (bass), and Leon Henderson (tenor sax) are not household items by the end of the year, I’ll eat their next two albums.

This initial recording, with the proper review and promotion, could well be the side of the year.

With fine individual performers demonstrating flawless cohesion, using fresh new tunes and invigorating arrangements, the record is fused with unlimited potential. It’s lovely to note how well they execute their singular tasks as they contribute to the vital whole.

It’s truly a beautiful album and you’ll all want to rave and comment on its beauty—as a matter of fact, I’ll halt my praise right here—you fill in the next couple of lines with your own sense of joy:

Yes, it’s been some time since the early hegira but we’re back in the groove again. And, unlike before, when the talent stole from the city by one’s and two’s, the jazz musicians from Detroit are now in packages of five with the same money back guarantee. With a unanimous uh-huh, after many years of individual dues paying the Contemporary Jazz Quintet has collectively arrived.

...a reputation that was to fade and not appear again until much change and suffering had occurred. It would be then in the form of five troubadours that a new day...

fifth Estate

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