

Big Winds Blow Lowdown Tones

You don't often hear a baritone saxophonist fronting a classic jazz organ trio, but on *Smul's Paradise* (Capri 74113; 52:42 ★★★★★), Gary Smulyan takes us on a low-down trip through his own personal paradise. The close friends featured in this quartet—which also includes organist Mike LeDonne, guitarist Peter Bernstein and drummer Kenny Washington—had never played together as a group and recorded the CD with no rehearsals time. Three of the tracks pay tribute to the legacy of B3 legend Don Patterson, including Smulyan's original "D.P. Blues." Dig the sweet bari-guitar unison lines on the pop standard "Sunny," the soulful, swinging soul of Patterson's "Up In Betty's Room" and the bebopping bite of Rhonda Scott's "Pistaccio," George Coleman's "Little Miss Half Steps" and Smulyan's "Heavenly Hours." The baritone king's soul-bearing cadenza at the end of Patterson's "Aires" is one of this session's many high points.

Ordering info: caprirecords.com

Baritone saxophonist and bass clarinetist Brian Landrus makes the low, heavy horns float on air. On his quartet outing *Traverse* (BlueLand BLR-2011A; 42:17 ★★★★★), Landrus demonstrates the tonal nuance, melodic sense and instrumental command that set him apart from his peers on the big pipes. Landrus plays with gentle authority, his pliable, distinctive tone built on expressive devices like vibrato, multiphonics and pitch bends. He has a way of connecting notes with subtle slides and graceful glisses, embellishing melodies with turns and trills that steadily build momentum and scream good taste. Landrus' bandmates on *Traverse* include sensitive pianist Michael Cain, who co-wrote three of Landrus' seven originals presented here; drummer Billy Hart, whose light-touch but complex cymbal work deepens the music significantly; and bassist Lonnie Plaxico, who contributes an essential pulse that keeps the dreamy-sounding material on course.

Ordering info: bluelandrecords.com

Bass clarinetist Jeff Kimmel and tenor saxophonist Keefe Jackson go head-to-head on Kimmel's *Charm Offensive* (Ormolu Music 001; 31:02 ★★★½), an energized quartet date marked by unison-line melodies, wide-interval harmonies and plenty of improvisational skronk. A spirit of freedom prevails, as both reedmen—complemented by bassist Devon Hoff and drummer Marc Riordan—venture far beyond the thematic heads that bookend each of the CD's six original compositions. Jackson plays a brawny tenor, while Kimmel stretches the timbral possibilities of the bass clarinet. One moment, the reedmen deploy postmodern devices such as split tones, growls and



squeaks that take the proceedings beyond the realm of traditional harmony, while the rhythm team punctuates with pointillistic dings, dongs and scrapes; the next, everybody swings. Contains highly listenable free-jazz that fans of post-bop can definitely enjoy.

Ordering info: jeffkimmel.blogspot.com

Wycliffe Gordon plays trombone, trumpet, sousaphone and even sings on *Hello Pops!* (Blues Back; 64:45 ★★★½), an homage to Louis Armstrong featuring a mix of his own compositions as well as Satchmo-affiliated standards like "Dream A Little Dream," "Hello Brother," "Up A Lazy River" and "I've Got The World On A String." Gordon's trumpet work is impressive, and his bubbling, barking sousaphone accentuates the lively second-line backbeat propelled by drummer Mario Fielder. Anat Cohen provides the hot clarinet this NOLA-inspired music demands, and vocalist Nancy Harms sings with old-school style and charm on two tracks. Gordon's vocal impression of Armstrong is a dead ringer—he nails the legendary singing trumpeter's signature rasp, inflection, accent and tendency to scat.

Ordering info: wycliffegordon.com

Sousaphone also plays a key role on The Soul Rebels' *Unlock Your Mind* (Rounder 11661-9117; 57:54 ★★★). This well-produced recording takes the brass band concept into the modern era, as lush vocal harmonies and uplifting raps join the blazing horns and dancing drums in one big street parade of soul. Guest baritone saxophonist Ben Ellman tears it up on "I'm So Confused," and Trombone Shorty enlivens the opening track with a ripping solo. The repertoire is refreshing, too, with the Eurhythmics' "Sweet Dreams Are Made Of This" and Stevie Wonder's "Living For The City" among several unexpected titles. **DB**

Ordering info: rounder.com



Paul McCartney *Kisses On The Bottom*

HEAR MUSIC/CONCORD HRM-33369

★★★★

Paul McCartney's *Kisses On The Bottom* doesn't seem to be making any big statements about genre or generations, or even about what may or may not be a "classic" or "standard" song. McCartney is simply revisiting—with obvious affection—music that moved him as a kid, suggesting a continuity rather than a rupture between old and new pop.

Pairing McCartney with Diana Krall was a brilliant move. Though Krall comes from the jazz side and McCartney from rock, they sound utterly at home on the lush, sophisticated pop terrain Nat "King" Cole inhabited so well.

McCartney sounds best riding light and high. He makes the soft-shoe brushes n' bass of "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter" all his own. (The album's unfortunate title comes from a line in this song.) Aided by guitarists Bucky and John Pizzarelli and the lively fiddle of Andy Stein on "It's Only A Paper Moon," the ex-Beatle brings plausibility to a world of fantasy. Likewise, on "The Glory Of Love," he makes us feel he believes every earnest word. His lush, sad, deliberate take on "Bye Bye Blackbird" is quite moving.

But when the singer tries to blow up his voice to crooner proportions, he sounds artificial, whether it's on Johnny Mercer's "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive" or his own yearning ballad "My Valentine." And while Eric Clapton burns on "Get Yourself Another Fool," McCartney plays it disappointingly straight (especially by comparison to Sam Cooke).
—Paul de Barros

Kisses On The Bottom: I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter; Home (When Shadows Fall); It's Only A Paper Moon; More I Cannot Wish You; The Glory Of Love; We Three (My Echo, My Shadow And Me); Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive; My Valentine; Always; My Very Good Friend The Milkman; Bye Bye Blackbird; Get Yourself Another Fool; The Inch Worm; Only Our Hearts. (49:18)

Personnel: Paul McCartney, vocals; Diana Krall (1–13), Tamir Hendelman (14), piano; Robert Hurst, (1–4, 6–9, 11, 13), John Clayton (5, 10), Christian McBride (12), Chuck Berghoffer (14), bass; Karim Riggins (1–4, 6–9, 11–13), Jeff Hamilton (5, 10), Vinnie Colaiuta (14), drums; John Pizzarelli (1–4, 6–9, 11, 13), Bucky Pizzarelli (3, 6), Anthony Wilson (5, 10, 12), Eric Clapton (8, 12), John Chiodini (14), guitar; Mike Mainieri, vibraphone (2, 4–6); Andy Stein, violin (3); Ira Nepus, trombone (10); Stevie Wonder, harmonica (14); London Symphony Orchestra (2, 8, 9, 11, 12).

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com