



Nice Work If You Can Get It
Mark Lopeman (s/r)
by Sharon Mizrahi

In the realm of traditional-meets-modern flair, Mark Lopeman is top-notch. The saxophonist and arranger unites with pianist Ted Rosenthal, bassist Nicki Parrott, drummer Tim Horner, trumpeter Brandon Lee and trombonist Noah Bless on *Nice Work If You Can Get It*. Lopeman harkens back to many decades ago with a selection of Sinatra, Gershwin and Fats Waller tunes along with two original songs.

The leader sets the mood on "Love Walked In", a delicate number laced in rosy saxophone swirls and Lee's warm muted horn. Rosenthal's piano offers a divine lightness to the smooth affair while Parrott crafts a tight musical backbone. The Gershwin composition melts into Debussy's "My Reverie". Lopeman and Bless form a recurring brassy motif, which emerges from the easygoing mix of cymbal taps, bass plucks and piano accents. Bless shines poignantly throughout, showcasing the range of his often-underestimated instrument in several brief solos.

Lopeman's saxophone assumes a narrative tone in the title track, ribboning across the breezy drum-bass background like a charming vocalist. Rosenthal proves a sharp companion to the brazen sax, adorning the air with elegant style. Every minute sashays in irresistible fashion, with a hint of swing.

"World Economy Blues" takes a sultrier turn. The Lopeman composition launches into a sea of outspoken brass and bass, featuring Lee in the forefront. Bless and Lopeman condense into a nearly singular aural mass, providing the piece's rich undercurrent. But the real fuel for this engrossing piece is Parrott's expressive sound; her rhythm is strong-willed yet subliminal, sensational yet refined - and thoroughly captivating.

"Everything Happens to Me" closes out the record on a graceful note with a saxophone-piano duo. While Rosenthal inches forward, Lopeman's tone surprisingly evokes the vocals of Chet Baker. His soprano sax croons a pure and melancholy melody, enchanting the ears from first note to last.

For more information, visit marklopeman.com. Lopeman is at Sofia's Tuesdays with Vince Giordano. See *Regular Engagements*.



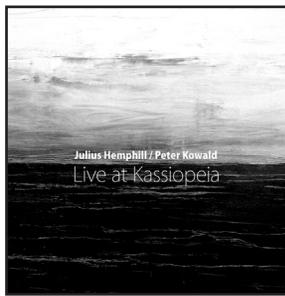
Dogon A.D.
Julius Hemphill
(Mbari-Arista/Freedom-
International Phonograph)

by Stuart Broomer

By the time Julius Hemphill died in 1995, he had made a substantial contribution to jazz, both for his potent melding of free jazz with blues and R'n'B and innovative work as a composer, whether with multi-tracking himself, small bands or large or all-saxophone ensembles like the World Saxophone Quartet and his own Sextet. These two releases present him in very different formats at different stages in his career.

Dogon A.D., recorded in 1972, was Hemphill's first recording as a leader. Initially issued on his Mbari label and then later on Arista/Freedom, it would become one of the benchmarks of '70s avant garde jazz. Strangely, it's only now appearing on CD, in a limited edition that includes facsimiles of the original Mbari and Arista artwork. The members of St. Louis' BAG (Black Artists Group), a parallel to Chicago's AACM, were little known at the time, but Hemphill quickly made a lasting impression, mining and transforming sources in rhythm 'n' blues (Ike Turner and Kool & the Gang were employers) and minimalist cool jazz (Gerry Mulligan was an early influence). His title composition magnifies the country blues elements apparent in the work of Ornette Coleman (with whom he shared Fort Worth roots), Hemphill pressing his vocalic alto against an R'n'B-inspired rhythm both hardened by the drumming of Philip Wilson (who had worked with Paul Butterfield and Juma Sultan [Hemphill turns up as well on the Eremite boxed set of Sultan's Aboriginal Music Society released last year]) and substantially lightened by the substitution of Abdul Wadud's cello in place of a string bass. Wadud's constant pitch bends even suggest slide-guitar. Trumpeter Baikida Carroll is an excellent complement to Hemphill, with a similarly blues-inflected wail. Those roots are less apparent on "Rites", an aggressive uptempo exploration, while "The Painter" has Hemphill's flute lyrically combining with Carroll's muted trumpet to suggest an exotic aviary. The CD adds another performance to the LP, "Hard Blues" from the LP *Coon Bid'nness* and recorded at the same session. With Hamiet Bluiett on baritone saxophone, it's an even more aggressive invocation of blues ancestors and funk roots. *Dogon A.D.* is that unlikely debut, a fully realized masterpiece that can stand beside any work that Hemphill would produce during an illustrious career in creative music.

Live at Kassiopeia presents a previously unissued 1987 performance from Wuppertal, Germany. It's an informal encounter between Hemphill and bassist Peter Kowald, with the first CD divided between solo performances and the second CD devoted to duets. Hemphill's three solos are drenched in blues, swing and bop and the Southwestern alto saxophone tradition from Pete Brown through Charlie Parker and Ornette Coleman that Hemphill had absorbed and extended. Even without a rhythm section, Hemphill swings as if unaccompanied alto were a mainstay of the mainstream, pressing at once into the past and the future of the horn with rare momentum. Kowald's single long solo piece moves from pizzicato to long passages of bowed drones with expanding harmonics. The duet CD presents two musicians equally familiar with the intersection of free jazz and free improvisation. After a seven-minute get-acquainted piece in which the pair



Live at Kassiopeia
Julius Hemphill/
Peter Kowald
(NoBusiness)

test various devices from high-pitched wisps and glissandi to ballad to sudden blasts of sound, they settle into the main event, a 36-minute duet with Hemphill and Kowald matching and layering their approaches. It begins in a long pensive stretch that gradually develops force and evolves into numerous textures, including moments of traditional swing propelled by Kowald's strong walking bass and passages in which Hemphill's intensely expressive playing is given free rein. The release is a fine commemoration of two lost masters.

For more information, visit internationalphonographinc.com and nobusinessrecords.com

IN PRINT



Music In My Soul
Noah Howard (Buddy's Knife)
by Ken Waxman

Metaphorically, alto saxophonist Noah Howard's musical life mirrored the history of jazz. Born in 1943 in New Orleans, the music's purported cradle, before his death on Sep. 3rd, 2010 in Belgium, Howard had travelled to San Francisco and New York, recorded for small labels like ESP-Disk, expatriated overseas and toured Europe, Africa and India. Completed just days before his death from a cerebral hemorrhage, *Music In My Soul* is written in the artless but competent prose of a constantly working musician with some haziness in chronology, spelling and details. Still with insight about the changes that took place in jazz following the advances of Coltrane and Ornette from someone who seemed to be present every step of the way, the book is doubly valuable.

Following military service in the American South, where he experienced pre-Civil Rights era racism, a stint on the West Coast exposed Howard to mind-altering drugs and finally guidance into experimental sounds from trumpeter Dewey Johnson. In New York, Howard's addition of New Orleans-style rhythm to cerebral sound searching had him recording at 21. Giggling often at the Lower East Side's legendary Slug's Saloon, Howard befriended major figures such as Charles Mingus and Albert Ayler and formed lasting alliances with other New Thingers including tenor saxophonist Frank Wright, pianist Bobby Few and drummer Muhammad Ali.

From that point on Howard reveals his amateur author status. Although he devotes some paragraphs to the factors that influence his compositions and improvisations, most of the volume becomes a recitation of gigs and recording sessions done, musicians and friends met and recalled, plus near-tourist-brochure reminiscences of countries in Africa and Asia visited. Finally comfortably settled with his wife of 30 years and helming his own AltSax label, Howard began playing regularly in the US again in the '90s, scotching rumors that he was another deceased Free Jazzer. Now *Music In My Soul* is his legacy, fascinating for its woollier tales about bringing experimental music to the hinterlands.

For more information, visit buddysknife.de