

Diango Reinhardt

Quintet of the Hot Club of France

PRESTIGE OJCCD-1895-2 (33:50)

Here are 12 well-chosen titles from the Ultraphone sessions at which the Quintet made its recording debut in 1934-35. The recent death of Stephane Grappelli lends a sad but special significance to these "sides" which were something of a sensation in Europe at the time.

Django Reinhardt was, of course, immediately the major attraction. Apart from Joe Venuti's records with Eddie Lang, there had been little interest in jazz violin. In his good notes, reprinted here, the late Martin Williams referred to Grappelli's ballad style as "sweet and full of sentiment," and it was of "sweetness that the violinist was at first often accused. Yet in the course of just these sessions, there is a noticeably steady improvement, particularly in regard to attack. So far as Django is concerned, "Blue Drag" offers a good example of the shape of things to come. Four brass, including trumpet soloist Arthur Briggs, are introduced on two tracks, and tenor saxophonist Alix Combelle more profitably on the last.

—Stanley Dance

Chris Fagan

Signs of Life

PLANET X CD 035 (69:58)

Solid, solid, solid: alto saxophonist Chris Fagan has put together a crisp and convincing set, in which the balanced contributions of repertoire and players create a steady stream of small twists and surprises that sustain interest throughout. He opens the collection with a chorus of "Night and Day" in dialogue with drummer Brian Kirk, establishing a deep groove and the phrase-ending figure that anchors the arrangement and his solo. The repertoire is well chosen, with well-made standards braced by offerings from the pens of Clifford Brown, Sam Rivers, Cedar Walton, Hank Mobley,

Benny Golson and Fagan himself. Fagan's "Blues with a Rub" is an attractive 12-bar line that builds from a laid-back, half-time feel to a terrific peak of intensity, in which the limits of the blues framework, bar-lines and chords alike, are tested nicely. Throughout, bassist Chuck Bergeron and pianist John Hansen are on call with a ready supply of swinging support and solo ideas.

—Bill Bennett

Michael Cochrane Quartet

Cutting Edge

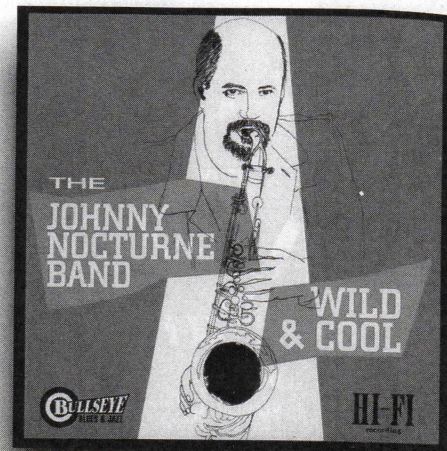
STEEPLECHASE SCCD 31430 (57:58)

Well it's certainly not nearly as incisive as the title suggests, but it does delightfully puncture both the mind and heart. Classic bebop is the forte for this date in which pianist Michael Cochrane displays his graceful phrasing and bottomless facilities through an alluring set of erstwhile standards and engaging originals.

Although his feathery touch and unhurried pacing give away his Bud Powell, Kenny Drew and Wynton Kelly influences, his original composition, "Lines of Reason" illustrates his fondness for Monk's rhythmic ingenuity. Both he and alto-saxophonist, David Gross effortlessly deliver some wickedly knotty lines that in the hands of less capable musicians would obscure the gleeful nature of the composition. Gross' biting lyricism which recalls the sharp-pitched tone of Jackie McLean heats up the cozy ambiance afforded by Cochrane, bassist Ron McClure and drummer Yoron Israel. The quartet exudes a mature coolness that never sacrifices the fire needed to sustain a successful bop engagement as evidenced on the uptempo title track that pushes the envelope slightly towards post-bop or the quiet classic, "I Thought About You."

Classy without being contrived, *Cutting Edge* is a rewarding date that sings unapologetically that bebop indeed still lives.

—John Murph



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