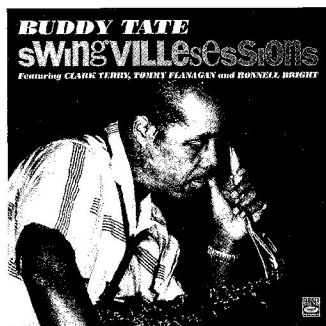


Big Bad Wolf the better. Smith gives it a fast reading, a slow, a medium, an Erroll Garner pastiche and even a mock rhapsodic build up. The nursery rhyme is too slight to stand up to such treatment but the rest of the programme is well played apart from an occasional lapse into musical theatre type overkill. Smith likes to play solo and there are five tracks where he dispenses with his rhythm mates. The straightahead Big Men disc is the best from a purely jazz point of view.

On the second session the leader has the opportunity to swap choruses with Kessel and the two of them work out some interesting variations on the familiar *Sound Of Music* material. Kessel's solos are superior but he was a seasoned jazz improviser by this time and Smith was just beginning to make a name for himself. The pianist does well with *Favourite Things*, *Maria* and *No Way To Stop It*, which turns out to be one of the best swingers on the entire disc. Kessel is flying high on guitar and his inspired solo work here and on some of the other tracks no doubt brought out the best in the pianist leader. There's first-class support from Corb on bass and Sinatra's favourite drummer, Cottler.

Derek Ansell



BUDDY TATE SWINGVILLE SESSIONS

CD1: (1) *Me 'n' You*; *Idling*; *Blow Low*; *Moon Dog*; *No Kiddin'*; *Miss Ruby Jones*; (2) *Groun' Hog*; *Buddy's Tate-A-Tate*; *Snatchin' It Back*; *All Too Soon* (60.34)

CD2: (2) *Take The A Train*; *20 Ladbroke Square*; (3) *Blues For Trix*; *The Salt Mines*; *Lucky So And So*; *East Of the Sun*; *Makin' Whoopee*; *Boardwalk*; *Overdrive* (52.43)

(1) Pat Jenkins (t); Eli Robinson (tb); Buddy Tate (ts, cl); Ben Richardson (bs, cl, as); Argonne Thornton (p); Wendell Marshall (b); Osie Johnson (d). Hackensack NJ, 18 December 1959.

(2) Clark Terry (t, fh); Buddy Tate (ts); Tommy Flanagan (p); Larry Gales (b); Art Taylor (d). Hackensack NJ, 18 October 1960.

(3) Buddy Tate (ts, cl); Ronnell Bright (p); Wally Richardson (g); George Tucker (b); Roy Brooks (d). Hackensack NJ, 17 February 1961.

Fresh Sound FSR-CD 835

★★★★

Jordi Pujol describes these tracks as "a pleasurable compulsively swinging collection of the easy blowing sessions that Buddy Tate made for Swingville". And that's what they are. The front line on (1) was a regular one that played for dancers in Harlem. Indeed, Tate became the essence of Harlem. The band achieved a big sound when it played the simple but disciplined charts that made up its library (*Blow Low* is a good example). It had a fine trumpeter in the little-known Pat Jenkins (who unfortunately stays that way because he doesn't get much solo space here) and some good trombone from Robinson. I suspect Thornton, who gives an excellent performance here, was just passing through. But the fat Texas tenor sound is front and centre throughout, and this is as good a collection of Tate's work as you'll find - except of course that any assessment of him should take into account his tracks with Basie. But there isn't a dud moment and the (2) and (3) tracks show him with a contemporary rhythm section. He was one of the mainstays whose style lapped easily in the more modern waters.

The quintet with Clark is a beauty. Terry and Flanagan were both at their best by this time and on *Groun' Hog* and *A Train* Clark holds the trumpet in his right hand and alternates with the flugel in his left - the first time this essentially visual trick was used on record. *All Too Soon* is a beautiful version to rival the classic one that Ben Webster did for Norman Granz.

The final session places the emphasis on the tenor, although there are some good solos from Wally Richardson. Tate is at his most relaxed and plays nice clarinet on *Lucky So And So*. He makes good use of a couple of Clark Terry's lesser-known tunes, *The Salt Mines* and *Boardwalk*. I'd expected to find this music a bit dated, but it isn't, probably because there's nothing complex here.

Steve Voce



LISA THORSON QUARTET LIVE

Blues For Alice; *There's A Lull In My Life*; *Estaté*; *Ponteio*; *Hearing Things Too/Chorado*; *Mood Indigo*; *Everything I Love* (41.12)

Thorson (v); Tim Ray (p); David Clark (b); George Schuller (d). Boston, MA, September 2009.

lisathorson.com

★★★★

Eleven years is much too long for admirers of this very good singer to wait for a new album. Lisa Thorson's last CD, *Out To Sea*, an excellent duo set (with pianist Cho Yoon Seung), was released in 2003 and although this new album was recorded in 2009 it is only now that we can again enjoy her singing. Not that she has been sitting idly in a quiet corner; far from it, because Thorson is a professor on the faculty at Berklee College of Music.

It is most encouraging that she is passing on her knowledge to a new generation because it is vividly apparent that her musicianship and her interpretation of lyrics are object lessons for all young singers. Thorson is backed by three musicians with whom she has worked for some 20 years and this relationship is evident from their musical empathy and integration. Recorded live at Boston's Scullers Jazz Club, singer and instrumentalists blend musically with one another in a set that displays depths of understanding allied to technical skill.

The choice of songs is most interesting, ranging from jazz, with Charlie Parker's *Blues For Alice* and Duke Ellington's *Mood Indigo*, through standards, Cole Porter's *Everything I Love* and Mack Gordon and Harry Revel's *There's A Lull In My Life*, to Latin, *Estaté* and *Ponteio*. To all the songs Thorson brings a warm vocal sound and a thoroughly engaging personality. The spontaneity of a live engagement adds immea-

surably to this excellent album. Please, Lisa, don't make us wait another decade before the next one.

Bruce Crowther

US FREE

FISH STORIES

Django; *Aubade*; *Low Blue Flame*; *Vibration*; *Son of Alfalfa*; *With You In Mind*; *Fish Story*; *Shades Of Jazz*; *Come Sunday* (54.41)

Bill McHenry (ts); Henry Grimes (b); Andrew Cyrille (d). Brooklyn, NY, 18 December 2006.

Fresh Sound New Talent FSNT 453

★★★★

Apparently this session fell through the cracks, and the almost eight years between recording and release make this apparent. Quite why it did is a mystery, because the music's far more compelling than a lot of contemporary stuff. This isn't down merely to the presence of two talents (Grimes and Cyrille) who don't qualify as "new" by any stretch of the imagination; if McHenry can be said to have heavy friends, he's certainly not overawed by their company.

The opening *Django* is from Grimes's pen, not John Lewis's, and it's essentially a statement of intent. All three men "blow", but the result is a collective effort positively greater than the sum of the parts. The title piece is also Grimes's, and if taken together with the one already discussed it becomes clear that the bass player has a knack for frameworks simultaneously skeletal yet substantial, and that impression's underscored by the intelligence all three men bring to proceedings.

Cyrille's *With You in Mind* has some uncredited recitation, but such is its levity that it simply enhances proceedings, which without exception amount to one of those rare occasions when expectations are not only met but positively exceeded.

Nic Jones

CHARLIE WOOD

NEW SOUVENIRS

No Repose; *Music Is My Monkey*; *Promised Land*; *Angel Of Despair*; *Detaché*; *Don't Think*; *Until The Fall*; *Mercy*; *Tube*; *The Tide*; *Ghost Town*; *Winter Song* (51.03)

Tom Walsh (t, fh); Mark Nightingale (tb); Ben Castle (s); Wood (v, p, Wurlitzer, Rhodes, clav, Hammond B3); Chris Allard (g).