



The New World Jazz Composers Octet
Transitions

BIG & PHAT JAZZ PRODUCTIONS 1021
★★★★½

Flip Philipp & Ed Partyka Dectet
Hair Of The Dog

ATS RECORDS 0694
★★★★

These writers' bands from Berlin and Boston balance humor (dry or zany) with serious chops, rollicking camaraderie with crackerjack virtuosity, chamber jazz textures with broad post-bop. Both emphasize composition over solos, touch classical inspirations and materials, and mine now-universal cultural motifs: waltzes, oompah, boogaloo, street samba. The Berliners get a leg up on humor, arresting textures (leaders play vibes and tuba) and a brilliant palette; the octet, mainly Berklee College faculty, blends in composers (Mexico, NEC) and freelance players.

The dectet writes unsigned billets-doux to Sun Ra (jumping "Mirrors"), Henry Mancini ("Woman Trouble" goes "Mr. Lucky" with vibes tremolo and gutbucket 'bone), Paul Horn/Emil Richards on the odd-meter waltz "Better Not" and Milt Jackson, whose lines pastiche the shout chorus of an amiable boogaloo. Blue Middle Eastern licks line a Topkapi cop-chase into bazaar alleys and echo in bass clarinet muezzin-calls. On "Hair Of The Dog," a tight poodle-do of tuba-laced brass in Zappa curlers, Jure Pukl's tenor rises from a subdued lilt on vibes/brass cushions to bone-rattling screeches over barreling rhythm.

The octet demonstrates a highly charged Latin bent featuring traps and conga on mambo, bolero, boogaloo, ballad. Ensembles unfold with relaxed confidence and solos with polished conviction. Tim Ray's every piano statement—from tossed-off interludes to well-framed solos—smacks of aware genius. Ken Cervenka's candid brass work burnishes bolero and ballad. Daniel Ian Smith's alto and bari declaim telling choruses; Dino Govoni's tenor sparkles. Improvised solo interludes conceptually space and mirror the tracks: Smith's raw skitterings and Ray's furtive curlicues presage and pique a bouncy Matthew Nicholl samba; Steve Langone's traps and Ernesto Diaz's congas rally with Smith for pucky whimsy.

Halfway through *Transitions*, Ted Pease's airy yet weighty centerpieces raise the bar, tweak us to reflect on magic, mystery and majesty. Something pairs cup-muted trumpets over strutting street-beat, as staccato lines weave Bartok-like over a swirl of solo moods—Smith eloquent, Ray ebullient, Govoni rampant. The march segues to the seductive, tidal "Spring Rounds": Those trumpets twine around Smith's creamy alto in a sexy *Rite Of Spring* bolero. Solos unfold organically from Ray, Smith's enchanted alto in a mesmerizing cosmic dance, when, at the gnashing climax, solo bass startlingly echoes the Rite's

eerie dawn-call.

—Fred Bouchard

Hair Of The Dog: Minors; Woman Trouble; Blue Mosque Blues; Hair Of The Dog; Kotzen Beim Steuerberater; Time; Better Not; Let It Go Ro; Groove Bag. (75:52)

Personnel: Flip Philipp, vibes; Ed Partyka, bass trombone, tuba; Robert Bachner, trombone, euphonium; Martin Eberle, trumpet, flugelhorn; Jure Pukl, tenor and soprano saxophones; Wolfgang Schiftner, alto saxophone, bass clarinet, flute; Fabian Rucker, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Oliver Kent, piano; Robert Jukic, bass; Christian Saffelner, drums.
Ordering info: ats-records.com

Transitions: Meta Mambo; Interlude 1; Transition; Interlude 2; Without A Paddle; Interlude 3; Empty Room, Bare Walls; Interlude 4; And Now For Something Completely Different; Spring Rounds (Variations on a theme by Igor Stravinsky); Interlude 5; Komla's Saudade; Interlude 6; Bats; Interlude 7; Triple Play. (71:34)

Personnel: Daniel Ian Smith, soprano, alto and baritone saxophones, flute; Dino Govoni, tenor saxophone, flute; Ken Cervenka, Walter Platt, trumpet, flugelhorn; Tim Ray, piano; Keala Kaumeheiwa, bass; Steve Langone, drums, cymbals; Ernesto Diaz, congas, percussion.
Ordering info: danieliansmith.com