

Dino Massa Kansas City Quintet Echoes of Europe

Artists Recording Collective ARC2680

Personnel: Dino Massa, piano; Christopher Burnett, alto saxophone and clarinet; Charles Gatschet, guitar; Andrew W. Stinson, bass; Clarence Smith, drums and percussion; Terri Anderson Burnett, flute (tracks 1,3,4,6,7); Freda Proctor, flute (tracks 1,3,4,6,7); Marcus Hampton, flugelhorn (tracks 3,4); Stanton Kessler, trumpet and flugelhorn (tracks 4,5,6)

Tracks: Alone, Echoes of Europe, Imagine, Notos, Paris, Remembering, Tarantella

Recorded April, 2016

Chris Burnett met Dino Massa on his first night in Naples while he was in the NATO Big Band while it was headquartered in that Italian city. They played together frequently and established a musical bond. Twenty five years later they reconnected, and Dino visited KC and played with Chris again on a couple of well-received dates in town. This led to a subsequent KC visit by Massa, when they recorded this CD of original music.

Five of the tunes were composed by Massa, with one each from Burnett (“Notos”) and Marcus Hampton (“Imagine”), both of which were written for this date and consistent with the



mood of Massa's pieces. All of the tracks are fresh and melodic, and are effective vehicles for solo statements. This is music that is intelligent and easy to listen to. Everyone here is on the same page, serving the music. Nothing is forced. The tunes move effortlessly from theme to solo. If there is a point of reference, it is where the mainstream matured to in the late 1960s and early 1970s: Herbie Hancock circa *Maiden Voyage* and *Speak Like a Child*, early acoustic Return to Forever (when Joe Farrell was in the band), and CTI-era Freddie Hubbard. The RTF reference comes from the opener “Alone” and its strong rhythm – Clarence Smith makes it all strut, carving up the rhythm on the cymbals early, then building in intensity through the solos. The use of the flutes here and on the other four tracks gives the ensembles a great breezy sound. The nod to “Maiden Voyage” in “Imagine” is not subtle, and I love the counterpoint from the flutes and the mid-chorus double-time led by the Smith snare. Hampton's solo is strong on his composition. I hear CTI in “Remembering” even before the fine Stan Kessler trumpet solo.

The best use of the flutes is on “Notos”, where they are gorgeous in ensemble with the two flugelhorns. I like the rhythmic tension and release to a straight 4/4 here as well. (I just love having the unique sound of the flutes everywhere here. They are totally in sync with the colors of Massa's music, and are a major element of the music's success.)

Massa is a wonderful player, highly lyrical, with a knack for building exciting climaxes in his solos. His intro on “Paris” is pure magical beauty. David R. Adler's liners mentions the elegance and energy of his playing, qualities I also hear in many other Italian pianists that I have listened to. Burnett's tonal control and melodic strength shine throughout. His bond with Massa's music is unwavering. Charlie Gatschet may be the most lyrical of Kansas City's guitarists. I love his solos, effective comping, and the sound he gives to the ensembles, especially where he and Burnett are together during the theme of “Echoes of Europe”.

This record was immediately attractive on first listen, and subsequent plays have not dimmed my enthusiasm. Thanks to Chris Burnett for keeping in touch with old friends, and making this music possible, and for introducing us to the music of Dino Massa.

—Roger Atkinson

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