

solo is unquestionably the beast
ages through his hard-bop grab-
ile Davis is the most elegant of
ists, working up to a pleasing
-ian lather and unwinding seduc-

JERRY TANNENBAUM

TEPFER & LEE KONITZ

With Lee (Sunnyside)

Pianist Dan Tepfer had
played with saxophonist Lee
Konitz for two years by the
time this CD was recorded.
The rapport that had devel-
oped between them made it easy to create
spontaneous improvisations in every key. Of
course "easy" is a relative word, as Tepfer
notes in the liner notes, since Konitz
looks for challenges, whether he's
playing standard or blowing without any
preceived direction. What is interesting
about the "Elande" pieces (all titled with a
French key signature) is how each one
takes a different approach from both play-
ers. Tepfer plays a spritely semi-classical
tune in "F#," to which his partner
responds slowly with warm notes. On "E"
Konitz strikes some chords and lets them
ring if he is actually standing back to
watch Konitz's ease in that challenging
key.

This album has any setbacks, they
are in the length of the pieces, none
hit three minutes, many lasting
under two. The pair's ability to contain
their exuberance is admirable, but the experience
is more like having appetizers for dinner:
delicious but without sustenance. Halfway
through they offer a full piece, Tepfer's
"Merka Tikva," and they conclude
with a 1920s standard "Trees," but it's
hard to wonder what could have been
if they could have let themselves go longer.

ANLEY

HENRY THREADGILL ZOOID

Brings Us To, Vol. 1 (Pi)

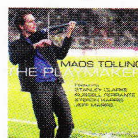
This *Brings Us To, Vol. 1* is
one of Henry Threadgill's
most challenging record-
ings, requiring great focus.
Its merits don't always mea-
sure up, but when the altoist/flutist/com-
poser and his Zooid quintet are on their
game, they're really happening.
Threadgill's jazz is both free and rule-bound,
with specific intervals for each musician
within. This naturally requires
a logic more than traditional melody and
harmony, but there's no way to know

that by listening: The compositions and
improvisations, by and large, are as meaty
and cohesive as the best-crafted standards
and bebop solos. The most notable excep-
tion is the disjointed first track, "White
Wednesday Off the Wall," which gives a
severe misimpression about the album to
follow (and perhaps was so intended).

Though Threadgill and guitarist Liberty
Ellman are most prominent, it's Jose Davila
who's the most interesting player here. His
trombone gives a shape both graceful and
contorted to "To Undertake My Corners
Open," while his tuba fuses with the
rhythm section (Ellman, bassist Stomu
Takeishi and drummer Elliot Humberto
Kavee) to form the rippling textures and
free-funk grooves of "Chairmaster" and
"Sap." In the meantime Ellman spikes the
tunes with a harsh, thorny sound that can
be off-putting but does add angle and exor-
tism. As for Threadgill, he's most compel-
ling on the disc's first half, where he plays
the flute. His alto sax is more penetrating
but less enjoyable—and, on "After Some
Time," sounds completely lost. *This Brings
Us To*, however, is stronger than its weakest
elements. **MICHAEL J. WEST**

MADS TOLLING

The Playmaker (Madsman)



Mads Tolling has an impres-
sive resume with the Turtle
Island Quartet, having
earned 2006 and 2008
"Best Classical Crossover"
Grammys for *4+Four* and *A Love Supreme: The
Legacy of John Coltrane*. The
Copenhagen native moved to Boston to
study at the Berklee College of Music,
graduating in 2003. Jean-Luc Ponty rec-
ommended him to bassist Stanley Clarke,
and Tolling's switch from viola to violin in
2007 now has him splitting time between
the Turtle Island Quartet, Clarke's band
and his own group.

Clarke, vibraphonist Stefon Harris,
drummer Jeff Marris and Yellowjackets
keyboardist Russell Ferrante appear as
guests on Tolling's sophomore effort, *The
Playmaker*. But the violinist's quartet (with
guitarist Mike Abraham, bassist George
Ban-Weiss and drummer Eric Garland)
open the record with a creative cover of
Radiohead's "Just," during which Tolling
and Abraham alternately skirt and state the
pop melody.

"The Playmaker Suite" is a trilogy
dedicated to three professional athletes.
The opening title track is for football

quarterback Tom Brady, with Ferrante's
piano adding flourishes to the odd-metered
groove. Clarke's bowed acoustic bass lends
classical tinges to "The Contemplator,"
a pensive cut for soccer great Zinedine
Zidane. Harris guests on both that track
and "The Risktaker," which shifts gears
between fusion and reggae to honor bas-
ketball superstar LeBron James.

Tolling also honors musical playmak-
ers. "Starmaker Machinery," for John
McLaughlin, is a manic, Mahavishnu
Orchestra-like piece on which Tolling burns
like Jerry Goodman, Abraham plays with
McLaughlin's fire and Marris impersonates
Billy Cobham. The Pee Wee Ellis com-
position "The Chicken," a Jaco Pastorius
catalog staple, is also a treat. Tolling opens
the tune by playing Pastorius' signature
bassline, then Ban-Weiss takes the funky,
syncopated baton from there. Even the
closing cover of Led Zeppelin's "Black
Dog" works. **BILL MEREDITH**

WAYNE WALLACE LATIN JAZZ QUINTET

Bien Bien! (Patois)



At the 2009 Monterey Jazz
Festival, whether by seren-
dipity or design, two of the
most impressive sets came
from a fairly esoteric niche
in jazz—that of trombonist-led Latin-jazz
groups, being Conrad Herwig's Latin Side
All-Star Band and the Bay Area-based
Wayne Wallace Latin Jazz Quintet. Both
groups demonstrated the ready adaptabil-
ity of non-Latin jazz repertoire to the syn-
copated strategies of particular Latin
rhythms, an idea central to Wallace's quin-
tet album *Bien Bien!*

Here, Wallace cleverly—but also organi-
cally—gives Latin-arrangement packaging to
such jazz standards as Eddie Harris' "Freedom
Jazz Dance," Sonny Rollins' "Solid" and
Duke Ellington's "Going Up!," the latter a
tribute to Ellington's trombonists of note.
Whereas those arrangements have Latin
identities from the ground and the grooves
on up, versions of John Coltrane's "Africa"
and Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood" are
Latin-ized mainly on the fringes, via Michael
Spiro's percussion parts.

Wallace, a fine player, musical thinker
and soloist, does the trombone connection
one further on this date, bringing into
the fold special guest 'bone players Julian
Priester and Dave Martell, who harmonize
the melody on Wallace's opening title cut.

JOSEF WOODARD

REVIEWS

By Christopher LO

SCOT ALBERTSON

With Every Note, a S



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step forward.

MON DAVID

Coming True (FreeHam



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