

## LUNAR ADVENTURES

*Alive in Seattle*

Nine Winds NWCD 0132

PAUL PLIMLEY/  
LYLE ELLIS DUO

*Both Sides of the  
Same Mirror*

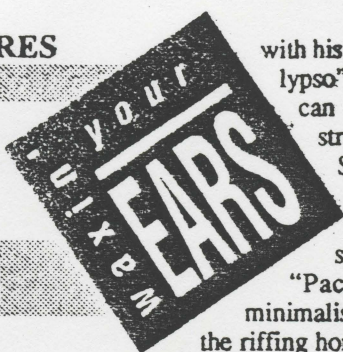
Nine Winds NWCD 0135

These two all-digital discs, released on Vinny Golia's Nine Winds label, set a standard that other independent labels should aspire to. This is the mainstream jazz of the '90s.

Both discs feature Vancouver, B.C. musicians. For those familiar with the Canadian jazz scene, these discs affirm the quality of musicians there and the vibrancy of their music. For the unfamiliar, the recordings point to Vancouver as a place to watch.

Recorded live by Doug Harre (not credited on disc) at an Earshot concert at the New City Theater in Seattle, Lunar Adventures offers an hour of highly charged improvisations that are telepathic and far-reaching in their influences. Ornette Coleman's classic quartet may have been an inspiration, but the group has built on those beginnings to forge a sound all their own.

"Just Ask" kicks off the disc, reminiscent of Chicago's innovative Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. Ron Samworth's wiggly-squiggly guitar solo is amazing, and Clyde Reed—a virtuoso straight from the Charlie Haden/Buster Williams/Ron Carter school of full-bodied rich sound—sets the tone



with his booming bass. "Celtic Calypso" begins tribally with African percussion—its anthemic strains recalling Ornette and Sonny Simmons. Samworth solos with a completely different feel—mainstream-ish, Jim Hall-ish. On

"Pacific Leen Time," a minimalist theme is fleshed out by the riffing horn of Coate Cooke and the parade drumming of Gregg Simpson, whose tom-tom work is outstanding. "Symbolist Waltz" is a wispy 3/4 piece, ruminative and probing, in which time becomes elastic. Once again the virtuosity of the players makes everything work. "Brooklyn" begins with bass, drums and AM radio: "Dale Ellis, Derek McKey," the announcer proclaims over a bass ostinato. John Cage is well served, and the tune takes a Latin turn, mambo-ing by in my imagination.

"Strange Air" finishes this amazing disc with a stroke of originality. Sounding like a thousand folk tunes you've heard before ("Frankie and Johnny" comes to mind), the group builds momentum like a sandstorm coming at you from across the desert. Samworth's guitar synth provides an eerie wash of white noise, underpinning Cooke's Ornette-like solo.

Lunar Adventures is one of the most interesting ensembles to emerge from our neck of the woods in a long while. They merge the way-out-West sound with Broadway. Remember the map that the *New Yorker* published years ago, showing the West Coast just a few steps down 42nd Street? Well, there may have been something to it.

The Paul Plimley/Lyle Ellis collabo-

ration, *Both Sides of the Same Mirror*, has gained its place alongside the Hampton Hawes/Charlie Haden disc, *As Long As There's Music*, as my favorite piano/bass duet record of the last decade. What a joy to hear a pianist who's ready to deal with Cecil Taylor! Plimley has garnered from Taylor an organizational sense and willingness to try unexpected twists of the melodic line. His playing is not what you could call conventional, yet it is not intimidating in the same way that Taylor's is.

Ellis has developed an incredible array of sounds from his gut-string, double bass—booming and macho, when necessary, with effortless shifts to arco or scratches on the strings. His work with Paul Bley, Cecil Taylor and Marilyn Crispell has proven to be the perfect schooling for this endeavor.

The compositions are emotionally  
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brehtaking. "Moving Through the Twin Entrances of Light" is at the same time helter-skelter and bombastic—lush and romantic. Plimley's chordal interludes are incredible; the energy is contagious; and the virtuosity is stunning. Jimi Hendrix's "Third Stone from the Sun" receives a masterful arrangement. It's especially telepathic, with Ellis portraying the sound of the Malian hunter's guitar (doussn gouni). Plimley, a noted malleeter, adds marimba on "Reflections of a Persistent Mirage," and Ellis again sounds very African. Truly music for a global village.

These two discs contain everything I listen to music for. The compositions and arrangements are fresh, the performances are virtuoso, and I'm left with the feeling that the jazz tradition is moving forward and is in good hands.

—Gary Bannister

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