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**VEJI NOW!****Hugh Fraser****& The Vancouver Ensemble  
of Jazz Improvisation***Unity 114*

It's a good year when you get three big-band albums out of Canada; it's a good decade when you get three out of one Canadian band. *VEJI Now!* is VEJI's third, joining two other recent releases, *Dave McMurdo Jazz Orchestra* and Vic Vogel's *Le Big Band*, in the country's record bins. Hugh Fraser shares with McMurdo the orchestral ambitions that the presence of 18 other musicians invariably inspire, and with Vogel a love for the pure excitement that 19 musicians can generate. As evidence of the former, *VEJI Now!* has as its centrepiece Fraser's 28-minute *Mass in C minor for Jazz Orchestra*, in which he handles a classical form with confidence, sensitivity and burgeoning power — his *Sanctus* is right out of McCoy Tyner's *Song for the New World*.

*VEJI Now!* also serves Fraser as a retrospective. His frenetic *Freeabin Suite* — the title is a play on the Russian composer Alexander Scriabin — was first recorded in part in 1981. Here, re-recorded in its entirety, it captures the headlong enthusiasm that Fraser originally brought to the big-band business. It is clearly a more settled, paced composer who is in charge of the *Mass*, now giving shape, as well as the free rein of old, to the energy his

musicians supply — in particular to the energy of reedmen Perry White, Pat Caird and Ross Taggart and trumpeters Bill Clark and Walter White. A word, too, for Blaine Dunaway, the Canadian Ray Nance, whose doubling of trumpet and violin seems tailor-made for Fraser's expanding range of interests.

**ALIVE IN SEATTLE****Lunar Adventures***Nine Winds NWCD 0132*

The Vancouver quartet Lunar Adventures describes its music in terms of "Electro-Acoustic Tribal Sounds in the tradition of the Twenty-First Century" and performs it in a wild, dervish-like manner that probably comes of trying to play off all of those esthetic and historical opposites against each other. There are a few moments of quiet, but these inevitably prove to be a matter of the catching of breath and the re-establishment of bearings. The four musicians — tenorman Coat Cooke, guitarist Ron Samworth, bassist Clyde Reed and drummer Gregg Simpson — whirl remarkably well together as an ensemble. Samworth's guitar occasionally gives the band the hip sound of the late 1980s, and the compositions of Cooke and Simpson are clear and catchy, but no one musician, nor any single element, stands out in what is by and large a group creation and, by and large, a group success.