

JAZZ / Mark Miller

ENCORE

Fraser MacPherson Quartet
Justin Time JTR-8420
 The Fraser MacPherson tenor saxophone stands with the Sonny Greenwich and Ed Bickert guitars and the Michel Donato bass among the most immediately recognizable sounds in Canadian jazz. The veteran Vancouver mainstreamer needs little more than a few phrases — a chorus at most — to announce himself. In fact, one note might do it, if it's the right one: the essence of his identity is in his wispy vibrato. To suggest, then, that *Encore*, which features MacPherson with his usual sidemen (Oliver Gannon, Steve Wallace and John Sumner) in his customary program of old chestnuts and such, is simply more of the same, is to miss the point. It's more of MacPherson, and that makes it unique.

THE FUTURE IS N.O.W.
 New Orchestra Workshop

9 Winds NWCD 0131
 The initiatives taken over the past 13 years by the New Orchestra Workshop, and the sympathetic ear given those initiatives by the Coastal Jazz and Blues Society's du Maurier International Jazz Festival, have brought the creative "margin" in jazz closer in Vancouver to the commercial "centre" than anywhere else in Canada. Five N.O.W.-affiliated bands are represented in this CD sampler: Chief Feature, the Paul Plimley Octet, Turnaround, Lunar Adventures and Unity, in

performances that date back as far as 1985 (Plimley) and that in some instances have been previously released on cassette. On the evidence, it would be hard to identify a N.O.W. "sound." The influence of Ornette Coleman can be spotted here and there, but that's certainly not unique to Vancouver. Some of the music seems dated — N.O.W. does, after all, announce its place at the cutting edge — but there's a compensatory urgency (Chief Feature) and a sense of exploration for the sheer joy of it (Turnaround) that speaks for the workshop's strengths.

SERIOUS FUN

Kathy Kidd Afro Latin Jazz Septet
Lowrider LOW-001

There's at least one band like this in every major Canadian city. Side by side they may differ in specifics — the number of horn players or percussionists (two and three, here), for example, or the ratio of gringos to Latinos (six to one) — but the stock Afro-Latin conventions tend to have a standardizing effect. For its part, Kathy Kidd's Vancouver septet takes a clean, scholarly approach to the idiom. Hence, perhaps, the title. Kidd, who plays keyboards and composes, draws on her Third World sources with great integrity. She seems enthralled rather than excited by the myriad possibilities, though, and it's up to her musicians — to Skywalker reedman Tom Keenlyside especially — to generate what fire the music has.

POP / Alan Niester

REFUGEES OF THE HEART
 Steve Winwood

Virgin CDV 2650
Refugees Of The Heart is Steve Winwood's sixth solo album. The first five, released through the eighties, established him as one of the pre-eminent rock acts of the decade. An attention-grabbing disc such as 1980's *Arc Of A Diver* was loaded with razor-sharp hooks and bouncy melodies, but *Refugees Of*

minute-plus instrumental funk of *In The Light Of Day*. In all, *Refugees Of The Heart* may not win a Grammy or score a hit single such as *Roll With It*, but it will probably be the first disc fans will pull out to play a decade from now.

NECK AND NECK
 Chet Atkins and Mark Knopfler
CBS CT 45307

It was Mark Knopfler's surprising

CONTRACT BRIDGE
 BY STEVE BECKER

North dealer.
 Both sides vulnerable.

WEST
 ♠ K 2
 ♥ K Q J
 ♦ Q 9 3
 ♣ J 9 7 3 2

SOUTH
 ♠ Q 10 7 6 4 3
 ♥ 7 3
 ♦ 6 4
 ♣ K 8 5

The bidding:

North	East	South	West
1 ♦	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	

Opening lead — king of hearts.

B. Jay Becker, the former editor of this column, liked to tell this story about the time he was playing with Helen Sobel in the Masters Team-of-Four Championship many years ago.

The bidding went as shown and Becker became declarer at four spades. West led the K-Q-J of hearts, South trumping the third heart.

Becker's principal problem was how to try to avoid losing two trump tricks. Several approaches were possible. If West had the K-J-x of spades, for example, declarer could not afford to play the ace and another spade since West would score the king and jack for down one.

Alternatively, if East had the K-J-x and South led the ace and another trump, the contract would still be in danger if East took the second spade and returned the jack. Becker would not be able to ruff his losing club in dummy in that case.

Then there was also the possibility that the club loser could be averted by taking a diamond finesse, or by cashing the A-K of diamonds and ruffing a diamond, hoping the queen would fall.

These and many other thoughts went through Becker's mind, and he took lots and lots of time. After a while, Mrs. Sobel got up from the table, wandered around the room, came back to see whether her partner

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edge couldn't hurt. It's no wonder that Bentall's version of AC/DC's "You Shook Me All Night Long" got a much stronger response than any of his own tunes. ■

Jade Orchestra

At the Vancouver East Cultural Centre on Sunday, November 11

• BY ALEX VARTY

Playing in Canadian jazz legend Claude Ranger's Jade Orchestra must be a very rewarding experience. After all, with VEJ's Hugh Fraser in Banff and John Korsrud's Hard Rubber Orchestra gigless, where else can local players get up on stage and wail on some demanding big band material? The months spent with Ranger in rehearsal will surely be prominently featured in many local résumés.

Alas, just listening to Jade paid no such pleasant dividends. While the big-time debut of this 19-member aggregate has been long-anticipated in local jazz circles, the music that the unit performed at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre was curiously lifeless and unattractive. Ranger's vision seems schizophrenic: on the one hand, his written parts display a sort of flatly chromatic sheen, like '60s TV sports music gone haywire; on the other hand, he asks his soloists to disrupt the music's gloss with the kinds of bleatings and blasts that typified

the New York underground of the '70s. The combination is almost painful, as the solos seem to be little more than sound effects, bearing no relationship to the ensemble passages, which are themselves crying out for leavening and light. And on Sunday the transitions between outside excursions and a sort of Nelson Riddle-from-hell slickness were very often made with a halting, grinding awkwardness that did little to lift either of the music's aspects from banality.

Granted, some of the soloists were able to struggle up from this morass of bombast and tunelessness to make moving, personal contributions. Clyde Reed laboured valiantly on bass throughout the night and at one point drew his bow to demonstrate just how good an arco improviser he has become over the years; tubaist Ian McIntosh took a sliding, rubbery solo that completely eclipsed his instrument's ponderous nature; and Bruce Freedman, on tenor sax, produced a squalling, agitated solo that — unlike most of the evening's similar outings — had some semblance of musicality in its shape and structure.

Any other moments of merit were simply drowned out in the blare, and the only consolation was that the program seemed a tad on the skimpy side. Thank heaven for small mercies. ■

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