

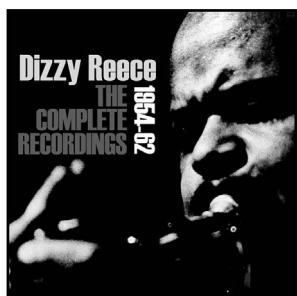
Primavera
Sara Serpa & André Matos (Inner Circle Music)
by Suzanne Lorge

Primavera, from singer/pianist Sara Serpa and guitarist André Matos, is 14 tunes featuring shimmering vocals, austere guitar accompaniment and simple, layered harmonies. The lean arrangements complement Serpa's vocals perfectly, neither intruding nor obscuring the singer's delicate, fast-paced vocalese or her carefully articulated lyrics. She sings in her native Portuguese and in English, using text drawn from poets like Alberto Caeiro ("O Guardador de Rebanhos" and "A Realidade das Coisas") and e.e. cummings ("Earth") and by singer Jeanne Lee ("Vanguard", inspired by Fyodor Dostoyevsky's short story "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man"). The duo excels at combining pure sounds—vowels, strings, words, horn, keys, breath—and creating soothing, inspiring musical sketches.

On the opening title cut, Serpa shows off her skill as an imaginative melody-maker. She doubles her voice on a line that alternates between legato and percussive phrases, exploring both the higher and lower vocal registers, repeating phrases in some sections and leaping to surprising intervals in others. By contrast, with "Se Me Va La Voz", by Argentinian pianist Guillermo Klein, Serpa delivers a straightforward rendition of the folksy jazz tune and on Ran Blake's "Vanguard" she almost speaks the art-song melody like a monologue. The shifts in color from tune to tune are subtle; you'll want to listen several times to catch the many nuances.

Matos is an emotive player who makes full use of space without losing the rhythmic center of the tune. His compositions ("Tempo", "Rios" and "Garden", for example) are contemplative, musing and modern; when he joins with saxophonist Greg Osby—on "Choro", for example—the soloist is free to move into dissonance but always returns to Matos' clear harmonic structure. It's an amiable musical relationship that hints at something deeper. Likewise with Serpa: the two musicians play off of each other symbiotically and synergistically and the tunes on the CD, taken together, offer a snapshot of where the duo are in their combined artistry.

For more information, visit innercirclemusic.net. Serpa and Matos are at Greenwich House Music School Jan. 29th. See Calendar.



The Complete Recordings 1954-62
Dizzy Reece (Acrobat Music)
by Joel Roberts

Jamaica-born trumpeter Dizzy Reece, who turns 84 this month, is an enigmatic figure in jazz history. A fine hardbop player who emerged on the British jazz scene in the late '40s-early '50s, his talents were strong enough to gain the attention of jazz fans and peers in America,

including Miles Davis, and earn him a contract with Blue Note Records during the label's heyday. But after making a handful of well-received U.S. albums in the late '50s-early '60s, he largely faded from public view, save for a few brief reappearances in the '70s. Although he's still living in New York in his 80s, little has been heard from Reece for decades.

A new multi-disc set offers fans a chance to delve deeper into Reece's fascinating story. The collection features everything the trumpeter recorded as a leader, on both sides of the pond, between 1954-62. The five discs include six albums made under Reece's name, notably his three Blue Note releases, as well as a handful of EPs, sideman gigs and obscurities.

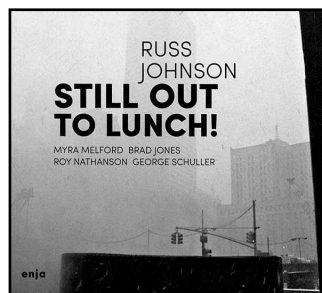
The early discs, recorded in London, feature fairly straight-ahead bebop sessions, with solid turns by Reece and other top British artists such as saxophonists Joe Temperley, Ronnie Scott and Tubby Hayes, all well played but with few surprises. But over the next few years, there's a noted growth in Reece's sound, more command, more risk-taking and a growing interest in world music. By the time he makes his debut for Blue Note in 1958 with *Blues in Trinity*, a session recorded in London, he's a fully-formed artist easily capable of holding his own with American stars like fellow trumpeter Donald Byrd and drummer Art Taylor. The album features mostly Reece's evocative originals, as well as inventive readings of standards like Monk's "Round About Midnight".

He followed that release with a move to New York and two more Blue Note sessions: *Star Bright*, with the peerless rhythm section of Wynton Kelly (piano), Paul Chambers (bass) and Taylor, with label stalwart Hank Mobley (tenor sax); and *Soundin' Off*, a quartet date with Taylor, pianist Walter Bishop Jr. and bassist Doug Watkins. Both albums are hard-swinging efforts combining Reece originals with familiar fare like "Yesterdays" and "Our Love is Here to Stay" and fit neatly within the well-honed Blue Note style of the era. Despite positive critical feedback, however, the albums failed to sell and Reece's tenure with the label ended.

Reece pushed ahead though and recorded perhaps his most personal, most forward-looking album, *Asia Minor*, for the New Jazz label in 1962. In the company of Joe Farrell and Cecil Payne (saxophones), Hank Jones (piano), Ron Carter (bass) and Charli Persip (drums), Reece explored Eastern-tinged melodies and more experimental compositions as never before.

What happened next? Why didn't Reece achieve the success and notoriety of some of his no-more-talented peers? It's difficult to say, but this rewarding set offers the best overview available of the important contributions he made to jazz during his peak years.

For more information, visit acrobatmusic.net



Still Out To Lunch!
Russ Johnson (Enja/Yellowbird)
by Kurt Gottschalk

2014 was a good year for Eric Dolphy. 50 years after his death and the release of *Out to Lunch!*, his greatest record, a number of reinterpretations of his work (the process which keeps jazz' blood coursing) made their way to the market, discs by pianists Aki Takase and Alexander von Schlippenbach, saxophonist Silke Eberhard and, discussed here, trumpeter Russ Johnson's *Still Out to Lunch!*.

Out to Lunch! is an oddly stark record, almost

sanitized, a quality that may point to Dolphy's background in classical music but which has led some critics to charge it sounds unrehearsed. Indeed, trumpeter Ed Armour had quit Dolphy's band just before the recording (saying he didn't like the music) to be replaced by Freddie Hubbard—no doubt a better fit for Dolphy's unusual compositions—so maybe the band wasn't quite ready when they went into the studio. Or maybe the album truly would have marked a new direction for Dolphy, even for jazz.

Dolphy's album runs hot and cold at the same time. It doesn't swing exactly but the potential of swing is in there. And it's that potentiality that keeps it from being heard as chamber music. The brilliant composer and noise-maker Otomo Yoshihide's nine-piece New Jazz Orchestra rerecorded the album in 2005, adding electronics and bringing out the tensions and dissonances in the original. Johnson focuses on the other side of the equation on *Still Out to Lunch!*. With a stellar band (alto saxophonist Roy Nathanson, pianist Myra Melford, bassist Brad Jones and drummer George Schuller), Johnson brightens—one might argue he lightens—the original, bringing out the jazziness of the tunes. The knotty complexities are still there; Johnson just makes the colors more vivid. The fuller arrangements and warmer playing give it, for better or worse, a more palatable feel than the original, with graceful piano playing standing in for Bobby Hutcherson's blocky, rhythmic vibraphone, nestling the tunes cozily in the pocket. The high point comes with the loping "Straight Up and Down", a searing alto intro seeming to inspire the band to dig its fingers deep into strong, unison statements of the theme.

For more information, visit enjarecords.com. This band is at Judson Church Jan. 9th as part of Winter Jazzfest. See Calendar.

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