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Tabligh  
[Wadada Leo Smith's Golden Quartet](#) | [Cuneiform Records](#) (2008)

By [Dan McClenaghan](#)

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For *Tabligh*, trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith has reassembled a Golden Quartet to blow, very Miles Davis-like, on a follow-up recording to *Year of the Elephant* (Pi Recordings, 2002). But the lineup, excepting the leader, has changed.



The sound is, in part, an exploration of Miles' electric period, from 1969-75, albeit in a sparer mode—a rhythm section and the trumpet rather than the guitar-driven, multi-layered assaults of some of Davis's more adventurous days. The music is dark, turbulent, murky, intense—often with an *In a Silent Way* sparkle, via Vijay Iyer's Fender Rhodes work.

Iyer is an interesting choice to take the place of Anthony Davis, who played piano and synthesizer on *Year of the Elephant*. On his own discs, under his own name and with his trio, Fieldwork, Iyer plays with a sizzling intensity and implacable forward momentum. His teaming with Smith takes his playing to more spacious territory and removes some of the urgency from his sound, leaving the urgency to Smith's trumpet playing and Shannon Jackson's drums. Iyer, when he's on the Fender Rhodes—he also plays piano and synthesizer here—supplies bursts of metallic colors and sparkling washes of electricity, making noises like the Northern Lights might sound.

Shannon Jackson (who takes an approach closer to the former Miles Davis drummer, Tony Williams, of the Second Great Davis Quintet of the mid-late sixties) replaces Jack DeJohnette, the drummer on *Year of the Elephant*, and the man who supplies the bustle and bump on the unfailing fine CDs of Keith Jarrett's Standards Trio. He simmers, then explodes and keeps things on a keen edge when Smith isn't holding down that job.

The tunes are extended avant-garde workouts—"Rosa Parks" clocking in at sixteen minutes plus; "Tabligh" running over twenty-four minutes—that roll from fiery abstractions to inward, edgy ruminations without losing their focus or accessibility. This is a fine step forward for Wadada Leo Smith's second great Golden Quartet.

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Track listing: Rosa Parks; DeJohnette; Caravan of Winter; Tabligh.

Personnel: Wadada Leo Smith: trumpet; Vijay Iyer: piano, Fender Rhodes, synthesizer; John Lindberg: bass; Shannon Jackson: drums.

Style: [Modern Jazz](#)  
Published: July 05, 2008

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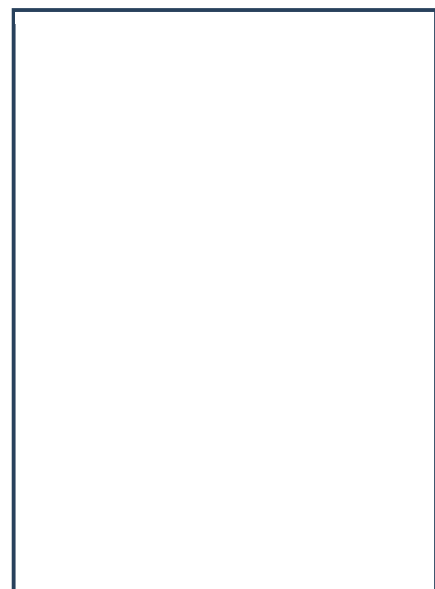
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