

Very much Stan Kenton's own creature, with his desire to formulate a progressive concert style, it's clear from reading Kenton authority Michael Sparke's new book on the band, that its members would have preferred something lighter and more hard-swinging along Basie lines. Me, too.

As might be expected, the ensemble playing is skilled, the soloists fleet and pertinent (each is identified track by track in the detailed accompanying booklet) and much of the writing, while redolent of screen music of the day, is varied and enterprising. If you're seeking something nearer to conventional big band music then look away now. Scott Yanow described Kenton's band at this stage as 'oversized' Seems about right to me.

PETER VACHER

JOSH KYLE

POSSIBILITIES

Jazzit JITCD 1155: 50.29

As a 24-year-old singer from Australia, based in the UK since 2009, Josh Kyle has fallen in with the right people. This debut album teams him with musicians Tom Cawley, Ralph Salmins and Geoff Gascoyne who also produces, arranges and collaborates with Kyle on two compositions. But the singer himself brings plenty to the party: the album begins with *Stardust*, the verse unaccompanied vocal, a fair challenge for starters and



Josh Kyle

one he copes with admirably, his range extensive, his intonation good, his phrasing expressive. The top of his voice is equally in evidence on *Round Midnight*, the longest track on the album on which Tom Cawley also excels. The majority of the tracks, however, focus on Josh's lyrics set to jazz tunes by the likes of Victor Feldman (a particularly neat match of words and music on the catchy title track) and Jimmy Rowles. On these tracks we hear an edgier Josh Kyle, staccato phrasing replacing the emotional intensity of his ballad performances. On Wayne Shorter's *Is it Yes or is it No?* Claire Martin shares vocal duties and Jim Mullen supplies typically exciting guitar (as he does on two other tracks). I must admit to less enthusiasm for the Gascoyne/Kyle originals, described as 'groove-based gems', but there is no doubt that Josh Kyle is one of the best male jazz singers to surface in London in recent years.

Claire Martin's assessment of him as 'the vocalist I've been waiting for' sounds a touch over the top, but who am I to argue with Claire Martin?

RON SIMPSON

FLETCHER HENDERSON

THE FLETCHER HENDERSON STORY A STUDY IN FRUSTRATION

Essential Jazz Classics 3CD Set EJC 55511

The title doesn't make clear whether the frustration is on Henderson's part with the unruly behaviour of his bunch of talented stars or their frustration at the bandleader's total lack of ambition and his cavalier business dealings. A little bit of both, I suspect.

These tracks are taken from the four LP set previously out on Columbia and they clearly show that the Henderson bands were the uncrowned Kings of Swing, a title which later Henderson's arrangements for Benny Goodman bestowed on that fortunate musician. But if the band was difficult off stand, they were superb on. Strangely while leading the band

Fletcher Henderson



Henderson contributed only a moderate number of arrangements and left much of that work to his brother Horace and to Benny Carter and, especially, Don Redman. For their time, and even now, these scores were luminously brilliant. The particular fascination of these performances is the opportunity to hear in detail the work of not only the giants, Armstrong and Hawkins, but also of other contemporaries and less publicised talents of Chu Berry, Rex Stewart, Jimmy Harrison, Benny Morton and the impressive and little known Bobby Stark.

Above all, it is the needle sharp attack of the sections that stands out. This was acknowledged as the best band of the Twenties and Thirties; more so even than Duke Ellington at that time. Here is the evidence.

It is not always that a record company's claim to produce a classic is accurate. In this case it is fully appropriate. Wonderful!

JOHN MARTIN



Dizzy Gillespie

DVD

DIZZY GILLESPIE IN REDONDO

MVD Visual 5166D (59.00)

Although Dizzy Gillespie's main influence is often said to have been Roy Eldridge, Dizzy (like many other jazz trumpeters) was similar in many ways to Louis Armstrong. Both men influenced the course of jazz with their innovative techniques, and both had an irrepressible sense of humour which emerged in their showmanship. Dizzy's upturned trumpet bell was just one of the devices he used to draw the attention of audiences, as well as the beret and goatee beard which distinguished him in earlier years. This DVD, filmed by Gary Keys at Redondo Beach in 1986, captures a typically ebullient performance from Gillespie's small group.

The musicians exhibit an impressive degree of talent in such Gillespie favourites as *Be-Bop* and *Birk's Works* - the former taken at a hectic speed with steam literally rising from Dizzy's trumpet; the latter played at a loping mid-tempo set by Ray Brown's reliable walking bass. Paquito D'Rivera extracts unbelievably high notes from the alto sax in *Kush*, and Dizzy's ironical humour is evident in the blues *Hard-of-Hearing Mama*, with a glittering piano solo from Valerie Capers. The DVD's sound quality is good and Gillespie clearly enjoys himself as much as you will if you buy this disc.

TONY AUGARDE