



**The Sabir Mateen Jubilee Ensemble**  
**Sabir Mateen (Not Two)**  
 by Ken Waxman

One of the visionary improvisers loosely affiliated with bassist William Parker's Lower East Side projects, multi-reedist Sabir Mateen is often featured with his own bands or contributing to-the-point solos in other small groups. Recorded at The Stone in 2007, this CD is, on the other hand, a rare and valuable instance of Mateen's writing for a crack 15-piece ensemble, which he leads as well as playing saxophones, flutes and clarinets. Consisting of two extended suites and a couple of shorter pieces, these taut yet expansive themes bolster the continued validity of free jazz without slipping into inchoate blowing.

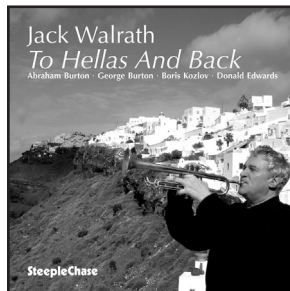
Most laudable is the two-part "A Better Place", which cycles through several moods until it reaches a stop-time climax at the two-thirds mark. String power pumps, slurred brass triplets and shaking bells gradually swell to an optimistic finale, helped immeasurably by lyrical cries from vocalist "M" Nadar. This is an appropriate conclusion to its despondent exposition, expressed in counterpoint by Mateen's alto clarinet and Shiau-Shu Yu's cello. Later the vocalist's whispering admonition to "have a little faith" is contrasted by jagged string shrieks, gulping reed

timbres and Don Ayler-like trumpet insouciance (courtesy of Matt Lavelle and Lewis "Flip" Barnes) until both sections connect following watery vibrations from tuba player Mike Guilford.

The strings' inner mournfulness is put to good use on "Shades of Brother Leroy Jenkins", performed a month after the legendary violinist's death. As agitated as it is reflective, the piece cleverly unites rasps, rubs and ratchets from various instruments into a howl of anguish, then downshifts to plainsong via Nadar's keening, plus lyrical obbligatos from pianist Raymond King. The latter's power chording provides the straightforward bedrock during Mateen's other major statement, the three-part "We Can Do". With its load of shaking percussion, chanted phraseology and stack of high-intensity saxophone solos from the five reed players, including baritone slurs from the underappreciated Joe Rigby, the suite is almost a throwback to '70s rhythmic exercises by Archie Shepp and Pharoah Sanders. King's playing provides calming influences, propelling the performance away from faux-Africanized percussion and chanting, and confirms the tune's jazz roots.

Jubilee Ensemble convincingly demonstrates that Sabir Mateen's composing is at the same high level as his playing.

For more information, visit [nottwo.com](http://nottwo.com)



**To Hellas And Back**  
**Jack Walrath (SteepleChase)**  
 by George Kanzler

In commenting on his use of an Iranian scale on "Grace", one of the tracks on *To Hellas And Back*, trumpeter Jack Walrath illuminates his creative process: "You know, people say that everything has been codified and done in jazz, but this is not true. A good composer borrows, a great composer steals, as somebody said. There's no need to keep playing the same thing when you can adopt strands and create something different in your own way." Walrath definitely does just that on a CD commemorating his band's tour of Greece, featuring material composed and/or played there. He's joined by familiar colleagues, including tenor saxophonist Abraham Burton, a frequent partner, and the rhythm section from the Mingus Big Band in which both Walrath and Burton play: pianist George Burton, bassist Boris Kozlov and drummer Donald Edwards.

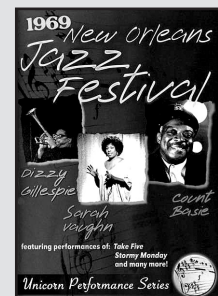
Walrath's compositions - all ten tracks here are his - owe a debt to Mingus, in whose last working band he played, in not only their populist thematic appeal but also in their incorporation of intros, second strains, shifting tempos and quirky voicings. The opener, "Leaving Santorini Blues", begins with a fanfare intro and moves into a rolling 6/8 feel as trumpet and tenor voice the blues line in a slightly dissonant harmony. Both then take solos veering from the established scales, trumpet shuffling tones and timbres, sax careening and overblowing before the meter shifts and the piano solos over a fast 4/4. In contrast, "Bees", the track that follows, a contrafact of Sting's "Every Breath You Take", toes a fast hardbop line in theme and solos worthy of a mid-20th Century Blue Note date.

Walrath has a distinctive, brash and brassy open trumpet sound, capable of varying timbres and plays unpredictable, angular lines and runs incorporating elements of humor and an unsentimental melodicism.

These range from his clarion, processional solo on the Iranian scale number "Grace" to his prancing, exuberant one on "O'Mangas", one of two pieces in odd meters inspired by rembetika, a Turkish-influenced Greek bohemian style. The CD is nothing if not a cornucopia of styles, ranging from downhome backbeat blues (two tracks) to homage to Wayne Shorter's Miles Davis period, "Panopticon", with a circular form and Miles-ian Harmon-muted trumpet. Walrath throws a lot of curves in his writing, but this band executes them all with an easy camaraderie, which makes even the most challenging pieces irrepressible.

For more information, visit [steeplechase.dk](http://steeplechase.dk)

## ON DVD



**1969 New Orleans Jazz Festival**  
**Various Artists (MVD Visual)**  
 by Duck Baker

Taken from a TV broadcast, this is a fairly interesting document, but unfortunately there are distractions. It looks like it would have on television, with washed-out colors and sometimes-blurry images and the sound quality and balance are uneven. Worse yet is the fact that no information about personnel or tune titles is given anywhere.

Things kick off with an informal quintet of Clark Terry (trumpet), Zoot Sims (tenor saxophone), Jaki Byard (piano), Milt Hinton (bass) and Alan Dawson (drums), which just about gets going on "Creole Love Call" before having to back a local singer on, Lord help us, "Stormy Monday". Next, baritone saxophonist Gerry Mulligan is joined by alto saxophonist Paul Desmond with the same rhythm section, though in this case the accompanists tend to get lost in the mix. The two principals are in good if not brilliant form. Things brighten up when Dizzy Gillespie's quintet takes over for two tunes, including a rousing "Mas Que Nada". The band in those days featured James Moody on tenor and flute with Mike Longo (piano), Frank Schifano (bass) and Candy Finch (drums).

Next are two vocals by Marian Love, a jazzy pop stylist whose star seemed to be rising rapidly at this moment but who left the business not long after. Since Love was a strong vocalist with a short career, one imagines that there are some who will treasure this performance, though Sarah Vaughan devotees might feel cheated by her one forgettable number. But at least lovers of jazz vocals can enjoy Richard Boone's contribution. Boone, a section trombonist in Count Basie's band, delivers a humorously hip, semi-scat blues some will remember from the 1967 record *Basie's Beat*. The Basie set accounts for about half the playing time and features memorable blowing from Terry, Eric Dixon on flute and especially Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis on tenor. The band hits fine grooves on "Cute", "Little Darlin'" and "April in Paris", but since these were all in the book forever, they can all be seen on several more consistent videos. Overall, this is an enjoyable DVD, but nothing over which to get too excited.

For more information, visit [mvd2b.com](http://mvd2b.com). The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival is Apr. 25th-May 4th.

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