

Cyrus Chestnut
A Million Colors In Your Mind

HIGHNOTE 7271
 ★★½

Artists with a fresh CD to offer often feel obliged to accompany it with a purpose, even when the music may be its own best justification, as is the case with Cyrus Chestnut's *A Million Colors In Your Mind*. Chestnut's higher purpose here, he says, is to escape his generation and work with musicians who came before his time, meaning those over 55. At 52, of course, Chestnut has largely become that generation and surely realizes that the 13 years between himself and drummer Victor Lewis barely counts for crackers at this point.

He has selected his repertoire with a similar retro purpose, and this also distinguishes the

Larry Coryell
Heavy Feel

WIDE HIVE 0325
 ★★

"Let's make a record here," says Larry Coryell before counting in "River Crossing," a chunking acoustic guitar track. That remark gives you a feel for the off the cuff sensibility on *Heavy Feel*, for better and worse. It's got the spontaneity of a single-day session, but it's also marred by some rush-ness and jam-band-esque noodling below the guitarist's caliber.

Coryell's importance need not be dredged up in full—just dig out Gary Burton's *Duster* and *A Genuine Tong Funeral* to hear the originality of his voice. Out of the gate, on "Ghost Note," that beautiful toughness is on display, the distortion-edged sound, the rough timing, the towering rock power, the cool chords and choked phrases. It's still there on "Polished," but already starting to feel a bit more forced in its rock affectations, and by the title track it seems a hollow gesture.

There's a scrappy Decoding Society feel to "Jailbreak," Coryell's lines sharp as barbed wire, drummer Mike Hughes playing it loose as a tipsy marching band. "The Way It Was" is more of a straightforward jazz track on which the guitarist shows his chordal imagination and trademark

present CD from many of his earlier trio efforts. He offers no originals of his own this time and few churchy touches of religiosity, which have been a cornerstone of his music since his Atlantic days. He touches on the work of writers from Richard Rodgers to Scott LaFaro, with a particular eye toward honoring pianist and mentor John Hicks.

Yet, there is nothing at all bygone about the playing. The sparkle that comes from flows of smartly strung notes splashing across currents of a swinging rhythm section do not flow backwards into the past. Chestnut uses the trio format to reaffirm its fundamentals, which may lack the charm of turmoil but offer the reassurance of design.

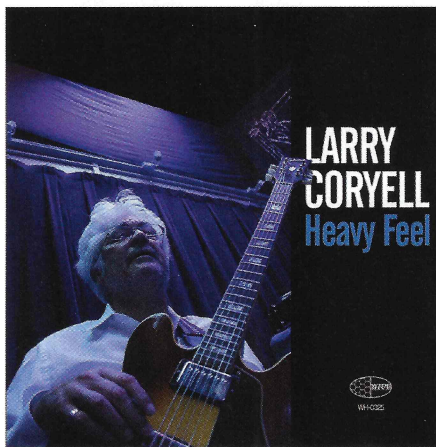
"I've Never Been In Love Before" (from *Guys and Dolls*) alternates a recurring introductory fanfare with gentle melodic variations and a bass solo, setting up an engaging contrast in pacing. "Gloria's Step" finds fresh roads not taken by Bill Evans and LaFaro in the familiar original. "Day Dream" gets a softly colored Afro-bossa rhythmic feel from Lewis, while "Brotherhood" has some blusey Basie-isms tucked between the tremolos and block chords. "Polka Dots" retreats into the privacy of solo solitude where Chestnut often seems at his most thoughtful, though at less than five minutes he never overstays his welcome.

—John McDonough

A Million Colors In Your Mind: I've Never Been In Love Before; Gloria's Step; Hello; From A Tip; Day Dream; Brotherhood Of Man; Yenenja; A Time For Love; Polka Dots And Moonbeams; I Didn't Know What Time It Was. (60:18)

Personnel: Cyrus Chestnut, piano; David Williams, bass; Victor Lewis, drums.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



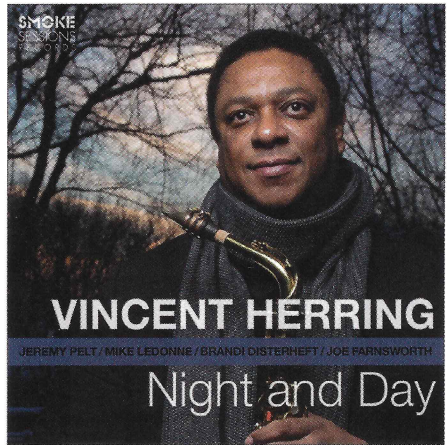
choppy arpeggios. George Brooks contributes soprano saxophone to the proceedings with conviction, though feels less than fully integrated into the band.

—John Corbett

Heavy Feel: Ghost Note; River Crossing; The Way It Is; Polished; Heavy Feel; 2011 East; Sharing Air; Jailbreak; Footh Path To Oasis. (38:48)

Personnel: Larry Coryell, acoustic and electric guitar; George Brooks, soprano saxophone; Matt Montgomery, electric and acoustic bass; Mike Hughes, drums.

Ordering info: widehive.com



Vincent Herring
Night And Day

SMOKE SESSIONS 1504
 ★★

I think of pinball when listening to Vincent Herring. Long known as one of the most fluid saxophonists around, he has earned his sizable rep on the kind of agility needed to flit from idea to idea. Like a player controlling the flippers, he calls the shots when launching a solo's trajectory. Like the ball itself, he revels in the unpredictable bounce created when it comes time to rack up points by careening through the bumpers.

Night And Day boasts several such moments. "The Adventures Of Hyun Joo Lee" is a hard-bop readymade Herring penned for a determined student, and his romp is defined by a controlled mania. It's one of the Herring's signature elements. A dedication to fierce interplay is found in all these tunes—a quality no doubt honed on the bandstand. A previous disc, *The Uptown Shuffle*, was a live date that celebrated jazz's physicality. This follow-up extends that, bringing the fire into the studio with a quintet that's keen on the animated sense of play the saxophonist so casually forges.

A blues lingo primes the pump. Herring is a melody man—he concocts all sorts of little tunes within his solos—but he likes his bedrock vibe to be steeped in the mainstream vernacular that fueled his forebears, like Cannonball Adderley. A case could be made that the blues is leaning toward a curtain call in jazz these days, so it's refreshing when Herring, now in his early 50s, speaks its essence with such authority. With trumpeter Jeremy Pelt egging him on and pianist Mike LeDonne throwing an arm around his shoulder, the conversations are offhand yet hardy. No compositional ground is being broken here—a stylistic myopia is one of the music's foibles. But the band's invention is obvious. It consistently conspires to show us how grace and swag can successfully coexist.

—Jim Macnie

Night And Day: Grind Hog's Day; Night And Day; The Adventures Of Hyun Joo Lee; Walton; The Gypsy; Fly, Little Bird, Fly; Wabash; Theme For Jobim; There Is Something About You (I Don't Know); Smoking Paul's Stash. (62:30)

Personnel: Vincent Herring, alto saxophone; Jeremy Pelt, trumpet; Mike LeDonne, piano; Brandi Disterheft, Joe Farnsworth, drums.

Ordering info: smokesessionsrecords.com

The Hot Box

Critics

John McDonough

John Corbett

Jim Macnie

Paul de Barros

Terence Blanchard E-Collective <i>Breathless</i>	★	★★★	★★	★★★★½
Cyrus Chestnut <i>A Million Colors In Your Mind</i>	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★	★★★
Vincent Herring <i>Night And Day</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★
Larry Coryell <i>Heavy Feel</i>	★★½	★★★	★★½	★★

Critics' Comments

Terence Blanchard E-Collective, *Breathless*

Breathless buries Blanchard in a thick and soulless soup of Moogish quicksand and post-production hocus pocus. It comes to life only when he slices through the goo with sharp but rare proclamations of defiance. He hardly takes a serious solo, mostly noodling around in the syrup or doubling with himself. A curious choice for such a talent—maybe a guilty “groove” pleasure to be purged. —John McDonough

Cool ambition, near miss. There's more exciting neo soul (Bilal, Omar, Van Hunt) and there's more engaging new jazz-funk fusion. *Breathless* is neither fish nor fowl, but Blanchard's musical intelligence should push the songs further out of their comfort zone to capitalize on his strengths. —John Corbett

The politics are pertinent and passionate. The groove is convincing but forgettable. The solos are watery and sodden. The music is meh-minus. Sounds like a summer festival touring project. —Jim Macnie

Cyrus Chestnut, *A Million Colors In Your Mind*

A commanding piano trio may sound like an oxymoron, but in Chestnut's case it's true, especially with such a silver-bullet rhythm team. Check out Lewis's distinctive riffs on “Day Dream,” totally inventive. Positive, chipper even, without anything too cute; able to plumb emotional depths with immensity of feeling, as on “A Time For Love.” —John Corbett

The vigor, the bounce, the glide—they're all staples of the pianist's approach and they serve him well on yet another program of standards. The trio's chemistry is impressive, and I could listen to “Day Dream” all afternoon long. —Jim Macnie

The muscular pianist and his perfect companions David Williams and Victor Lewis take a somewhat retro trip to classic piano-trio land, evoking Oscar Peterson, Tatum and others. Chestnut shines on Scott LaFaro's “Gloria's Steps,” drops Strayhorn's “Day Dream” into a spritely 5/4 and waxes tenderly rhapsodic on Johnny Mandel's “A Time For Love.” Though the tremolos, glisses and swooping flourishes get a bit cocktailish, this is warm, swinging stuff. —Paul de Barros

Vincent Herring, *Night And Day*

Herring helms a tight, bounding, hard-swinging quintet here that barely stops for a reflective breath or leaves anything not to like. LeDonne delivers a propulsive appreciation of Cedar Walton. And Herring sweeps through a ballad like “The Gypsy” or a zephyr like “Fly Little Bird, Fly” with an assured Parker-esque panache. Contemporary bop at its best. —John McDonough

Programmed for pleasurable listening, no erratic moves, straight and fine. LeDonne's playing adds extra character, nodding openly at Cedar Walton (love the stop-start of his namesake track), and Cannonball Adderley's spirit is present, recast in a contemporary setting. —John Corbett

How robust, soulful and swinging Herring sounds, with his fat tone, forthright delivery and calibrated-for-color intonation. Love his scampering solo on “The Gypsy,” the inevitable Cannonball tribute, “Wabash,” and the nods to Cedar Walton. —Paul de Barros

Larry Coryell, *Heavy Feel*

Nice mix of acoustic virtuosity (“River Crossing”) to soften the heavier, pelting blows. Coryell and Brooks find brief, quirky intrigues on “Jailbreak,” though its charm is initially crippled by a petulant, hammering rhythm. In the end, the sensibility is fusion, only marginally jazz—a dismissal I will trust my fellow critic colleagues perhaps to temper. —John McDonough

I've spaced a bit on the guitarist's last few albums, so I'm somewhat surprised that this ho-hum potpourri of sounds seems as frenetic as it does. Coryell's often done well with aggression, and the texture and attack help carry the day, even if the tunes are uneven. —Jim Macnie

Hard to know what the virtuoso jazz-rock guitar hero had in mind here with this undercooked, under-40-minute sprinkling of short, heavy metal jazz impressions, though the title track's wah-wah rock and the chipper, whimsical “Jailbreak” are attractive. —Paul de Barros

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