



## MARK LEWIS: NEW YORK SESSION CD RS1042

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I knew this recording was in the mix, as a couple of times Lewis had toured back east rehearsing and recording. This is a very strong project, all Lewis' original compositions, and shows his prowess as a major player in the international world of jazz music.

He continually plays with internationally recognized musicians, like top twenty of all time bass player, David Friesen, or the highly inventive international concert player and instructor, John Stowell, on guitar. Here, he teams up with George Cables on piano, Victor Lewis on drums, and Essiet Essiet on bass for a quartet that digs inside and moves these songs forward. The recording opens with the gorgeous ballad "Koan." Lewis is a wavering bee on flute, and his solos waver and moan. Clear tone, beautiful, as the bass comes in with a light dance. Piano is light and supportive with touches of percussion. The backing of the flute takes on more dynamics as Lewis flutters and extends. Cables warmly works the ballad lines with the big bass from Essiet anchoring, then a cascade of piano notes picks up slight Victor Lewis percussion, only to have Cables take the piano up a notch. Lewis returns in warm flute tones that carry and suspend. "Child's Play" has Lewis on alto sax with drummer Lewis in an almost patriotic drummer-boy roll; then they burst out an up-speed bop head with a high-speed Essiet bass, Cables touching, and the drums with little shots. Mark is like a hyper Paul Desmond with warm notes pouring rapidly and then building the volume and intensity, releasing to a hard swinging Cables in fistfuls of driving highly rhythmic piano lines. Breathtaking solos and movement. Players are all involved. Lewis returns to trade with Victor Lewis with brisk shots by both. A joyful, fun bop. "DL's Blues" is a lazy loping blues with Lewis even more in the Desmond lyrical mood working off Cables' warm blues swing undercurrent. The bass walks and the piano talks blues, all warm, singing, developing in complexity. Lewis cements with just dashes of drum color. Back to Mark, who stays in the melodic swinging blues space, grabbing a high note, but all under a warm dancing control. The body sways from the solid core of this song. Essiet takes a solo without rustling a feather while he swings to the core. Back come drums and piano to trade and swing out. "Boberto's Magical World" gives a strong Latin backbeat as Lewis takes the alto quietly in little accents, lightly like a Jobim vocal. Such a dance, a shuffle Latin style. Victor Lewis makes magic feet for all with the percussion. They have a strong but not heavy-handed Latin pulse, and by a third of the way through the six-minute cut, Lewis has begun to tune it up, diving, swooping, hitting some sharp high notes but then releasing as Cables takes the lyricism into the piano dancing our socks off. He grabs clusters of mid-range notes, makes dashing runs, counters both hands in a delightful solo. Again we get Victor Lewis' controlled, exact yet warm percussion solos, many inventive trades with piano and alto. Lewis on alto goes back to the dancing head and takes it out. A light, easy, warm, just slightly swinging piano takes us into "Connie," a talking alto solo, warm, taking us into that Desmond space from the Lewis perspective. He makes it feel so easy and engages such warmth in his alto lines. Superb backing of his solo by the trio. The inventive, totally accessible original music will take you in. Cables takes the cue and dances the line, charging slightly and then using the high portion of the piano. He develops superb lyricism while gaining complexity. Cables releases to the low, sonorous sound of Essiet's bass with bold warmth and still the lyricism. Mark is very good at keeping all the players in the middle of the mix. The alto comes back in quietly with the lyrical head. Gorgeous warmth. "Sierra Leone," with bass and percussion has a slightly jungle walk piano and alto drifting over top with Lewis quietly calling out. They take you into the weaving, reminiscent of some 70s jazz, staying interesting and moving with floating piano and alto using

long extended lines that fade to the ending. Kind of a "Dream When You're Feeling Blue" type of feel. "Up To It" is a driving, straight-ahead bop with an intricate light-driving dance by Lewis' alto. He develops the rapid complexity while staying confined within the accuracy and streaming note line and avoids screeching it out. Victor Lewis has little percussive bursts. Cables jumps all over with rapid continuing runs. He drives with so much lyricism and with always interesting piano solos. Essiet is just hard swinging under it all as Victor Lewis punches and keeps the meter rolling. Lewis returns burning in a warm lyrical full tone. "Not As Beautiful As You" features Cables in beautiful ballad chords and runs using most of the piano but very lyrical, a gorgeous warm full sound. He never pulses, is deep in the ballad mode, slowly building and releasing. This is Cables in full wide gorgeous panorama. Mark moves in, barely breathing, taking from the Cables lines and extending, staying warm and close to the beauty of the ballad. Bass and percussion are just touching, accenting, filling a sound. Such quiet, loving beauty. You can hear a singer in this somewhere. Again, the Desmond influence, but the way Cables and Mark work is a different warmth and beauty. "Summer is Over" is a laid back light dance led with the alto sax warm, lyrical, and just skirting the piano, bass, and touch of percussion. There is a bit of loping and space as piano and rhythm accent the sound of the horn. Cables' solo is light with little high-end runs, always swinging to the pulse of Victor Lewis underneath. Bass just kind of hits notes here and there for emphasis and rhythmic impact. Lewis closes warmly with the head. "The Lydian Express" has the alto running lightly then pushing the dancing motif as the rhythm sways to slightly Latin underneath; again, the opening is more like a Jobim vocal. Essiet has a highly lyrical, expressive bass line with just touches of percussion as he builds with rapid bass clusters, and the piano can barely be heard hinting the line. Cables comes back in dancing the lyrical line again with much warmth, beauty, and keeping mind and feet moving even as he builds the complexity. "Roll 'em Joe" is the most scorched-earth shot and written for guitarist Joe Huron. If in my writing I seem to be falling away from the driving sax, large sound blowing and extensions, never fear. In "Roll 'em Pete," after a fully stated head and the driving catchy dancing rhythm that they are all engaged in, Lewis begins to drive, exploring, heavy circular blowing, gritty biting, extensions, going down to the lower guttural part of the alto. He counters his own blowing, develops some walls of sound out of the Wilson/Coltrane book. He releases to Cables who dances lyrically, quickly, tightly and stays a bit above the Lewis fray, but in a swinging building sound that starts to dive low. Suddenly, piano cluster gems emerge. All the time, Victor Lewis and Essiet are driving the song home. Victor Lewis has a low, almost conga drum start that builds in his solo. Hear him change the intricacy and interplay. Mark Lewis is back in, and they drive with raspy alto, almost like Lewis has a special reed in the alto. This is a strong finish to a superb CD that should bring more international jazz attention to this Northwest jazz legend. I feel privileged to have watched his growth since 1976. Packaging is a triple fold-over eight-panel with a jewel box for holding the CD. Author and publisher and reviewer for many ions, Ted Gioia wrote the liner notes that are informative and show his love of what he considers one of the major talents around, doing this gratis to make sure folks understand how good Mark Lewis is in our world jazz scene. His notes take three panels. Another has a fine Mark Lewis picture, then one with the band, and another with the band sitting (a wonderful shot). There are the songs and playing time. Cover has a close-up headshot of Mark and the taxis running the streets of New York. Another panel has credits and contacts along with a picture of Mark and his flute. The actual CD has all the info title, artist, contact tune list, and times! Yes! Back binding has big clear info for shelf retrieval.