

Dr. John
*Ske-Dat-De-Dat:
The Spirit Of Satch*

CONCORD 35187
★★★★½

Dr. John (aka Mac Rebbenack) made it clear with his 2012 masterpiece, *Locked Down* (Nonesuch), that his penchant for musical risk-taking won't likely be dulled by the passing of years. Shortly after that album's release, he replaced his New Orleans-based band with a Sarah Morrow-led group dubbed The Nite Trippers, whose straight-hitting rhythms and slick horn arrangements did away with the loose, between-the-cracks feel of his previous Lower 911 ensemble.

The Louis Armstrong tribute *Ske-Dat-De-Dat* reflects a musical adventurousness not unlike Rebbenack's unexpected personnel change. "What A Wonderful World" thrives in its reworked,

Nicole Mitchell's Black Earth Ensemble
Intergalactic Beings

FPE RECORDS 002
★★★★

Intergalactic Beings is the second installment in flutist Nicole Mitchell's ongoing translation of Octavia Butler's fiction into music. Butler's novel *Dawn* presents a dilemma: how to live with sexual subjugation and genetic transformation, if those are the only ways to avoid extinction.

On the new album, Mitchell has set out to create a musical dialogue with Butler's literature. Despite the presence of singer Mankwe Ndots, whom some might recognize from her appearances with reedist Douglas Ewart, Mitchell doesn't expend much effort on lyrical exposition. Instead she uses various sounds and texture to imply narrative and evoke emotions similar to what one might experience while reading a disturbing but vividly rendered story.

Unlike the overtly swinging music of her recent Delmark CD, *Aquarius*, this suite encompasses contemporary chamber music, ritualistic vocal incantations and harrowingly violent expressions of agitation. Strings clash, and woodwinds carve out eerie melodies against backdrops that shift mercurially from emptiness to elastic grooves to looming orchestral chasms.

Instrumental soloing is not really the point here, so while there is plenty of marvelous playing, and guitarist Jeff Parker effectively sum-

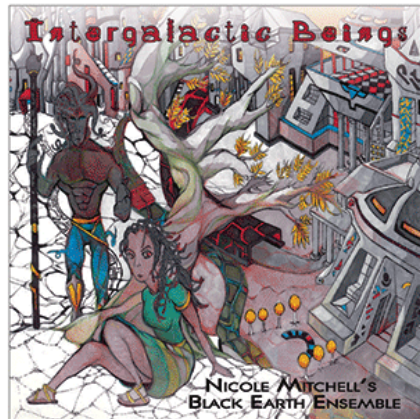
uptempo capacity, with a crystalline solo from Nicholas Payton balancing out the warm, rumbling voices of the Blind Boys of Alabama. On the highlight "Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams," Dr. John slows his trademark growl, letting his voice crackle and swirl around elongated notes, before Terence Blanchard follows suit, riffing on similar phrases. Caribbean rhythms invigorate a collaboration with the Dirty Dozen Brass Band on "When You're Smiling," and "Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen" gets a soulful, contemporary gospel treatment courtesy of Ledisi, The McCrary Sisters and Dr. John's luminous piano intro.

At times, the massive scope of this undertaking distracts from its success. Guest-star action occasionally leaves Dr. John little room to shine ("Motherless Child"), and some arrangements could benefit from a less-prescribed approach—issues that may work themselves out as Rebbenack finds his footing amid new peers and fresh creative impulses.
—Jennifer Odell

Ske-Dat-De-Dat: The Spirit Of Satch: What A Wonderful World; Mack The Knife; Tight Like That; I've Got The World On A String; Gutbucket Blues; Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child; That's My Home; Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen; Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams; Dippermouth Blues; Sweet Hunk O' Trash; Memories Of You; When You're Smiling. (60:04)

Personnel: Dr. John, piano, vocals; Sarah Morrow, trombone; Bobby Floyd, Ivan Neville, Hammond B-3; Derwin Perkins, guitar; Reginald Veal, Jason Weaver, acoustic bass; Donald Ramsey, Tony Gullage, electric bass; Herlin Riley, Jamison Ross, drums; Arturo Sandoval, Terence Blanchard, Nicholas Payton, James Andrews, Barney Floyd, Eric Lucero, Nick Volz, trumpet; Wendell Brunious, flugelhorn; Khari Allen Lee, alto saxophone, flute; Roderick Paulin, alto saxophone; Ed Petersen, tenor saxophone; Carl A. Blouin Sr., Oliver Bonie, baritone saxophone; Kendrick Marshall, keyboard; Poncho Sanchez, percussion; Tom Fischer, clarinet; Rex Gregory, bass clarinet; The McCrary Sisters, The Blind Boys of Alabama, Mike Ladd, Telmary, Bonnie Raitt, Shemekia Copeland, Anthony Hamilton, Ledisi, vocals; Dirty Dozen Brass Band (13).

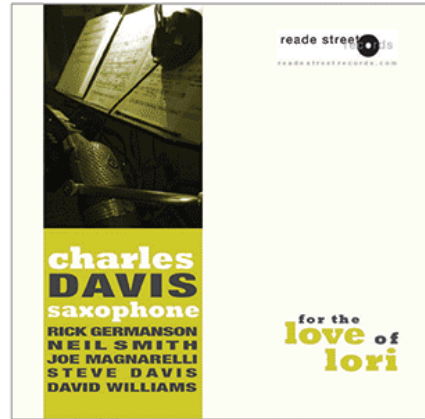
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sounds, it's the music's shape and feel that count, not individual statements. When it works, as on the delicate poetic recital "Web Of Hope" and the well-balanced juxtaposition of liquid and jagged movements on "Resisting Entanglement," this is deeply affecting work. But there are other passages where rhythmic stasis and a boomy live recording make for rough going, and a little bit of the generously featured Ndots's voice goes a long way.
—Bill Meyer

Intergalactic Beings: Phases Of Subduction; Cycle Of Metamorphosis; The Ool Moves; Dripping Matter; Negotiating Identity; Web Of Hope; Fields Of Possibility; Resisting Entanglement; The Inevitable. (60:25)

Personnel: Nicole Mitchell, flute; Mankwe Ndots, vocals; David Boykin, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; Renee Baker, violin; Tomeka Reid, cello; Jeff Parker, electric guitar; Joshua Abrams, bass; Armond Beal, percussion; Mance Roberts, drums.



Charles Davis
For The Love Of Lori

READE STREET RECORDS 1111
★★★★★

Veteran saxophonist Charles Davis has been working for more than 50 years, and he's been a reliable sideman to leaders ranging from Dinah Washington to Archie Shepp. But there's no sign of him slowing down, even in the face of personal hardship. Two years ago, he lost his wife, and *For The Love Of Lori* is dedicated to her memory. The disc is a moving tribute and his playing is as sensitive as it is robust. This memorial for her and a couple of Davis' recently departed longtime colleagues conveys little melancholia.

The title track, which Davis composed, is the disc's emotional centerpiece, and there's no doubt that he puts everything he has into performing this lovely ballad. He exudes a rounded tone with an ideal amount of vibrato over pianist Rick Germanson's sparse chord changes. Trumpeter Joe Magnarelli answers with just as much warmth, and no notes are wasted or drawn out for excessive paths. Another Davis-penned tribute, "KD" (for Kenny Dorham), has an equally strong saxophone-trumpet dialogue, with drummer Neil Smith subtly changing up the tempo in the background. Smith's solo during "Into The Himalayas" features a surprising approach to unexpected parts of the kit. Germanson also arranged a new version of the late Cedar Walton's "Cedar's Blues" that succinctly shows off each member's skills at aggressive tempos. While most of the disc centers around the solid post-bop that has always been Davis' forte, the saxophonist stretches beyond that terrain through his new arrangement of Julian Priester's "Juliano" that highlights a more exploratory solo from trombonist Steve Davis.

For The Love Of Lori concludes with a spirited rendition of the standard "I'll Be Seeing You." The overall feeling is that a life's passing is to be celebrated more than merely mourned.
—Aaron Cohen

For The Love Of Lori: Begues; What'll I Do?; Juliano; KD; For The Love Of Lori; Into The Himalayas; Cedar's Blues; I'll Be Seeing You. (57:36)

Personnel: Charles Davis, tenor saxophone; Steve Davis, trombone; Joe Magnarelli, trumpet; Rick Germanson, piano; David Williams, bass; Neil Smith, drums.

mons a sci-fi vibe with an array of otherworldly

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