

Mp3 Will Lee & Bill Lee - Birdhouse



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Smoking' jazz played by modern players in traditional style. Bill Lee: Piano, Will Lee: Bass, Billy Hart: Drums, Michael Brecker: saxophone, Randy Brecker: trumpet. And more. 12 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Bebop, JAZZ: Traditional Jazz Combo Details: [Note: If you're ordering from outside of the US, please read the note at the bottom of this page. Thanks!] BirdHouse Bill Lee-Piano Will Lee-Bass Billy Hart-Drums Michael Brecker-saxophone Randy Brecker-trumpet Warren Chiasson-vibes Bob Dorough-vocals Lew Soloff-trumpet John Tropea-guitar Produced by Will Lee About BirdHouse This jubilant celebration of Charlie Parker's music is not only a paean to the legendary alto saxophonist and bebop pioneer who died on March 12, 1955 at the age of 34, it is also a family affair that unites father and son in their first-ever recording project together. Dr. William F. Lee III (or Bill to his friends) is a jazz educator of much renown who co-founded the International Association for Jazz Education and served as one of its past presidents and executive director. An academic innovator, he held positions of professor, dean and vice president at St. Mary's University, the University of Texas at Austin, Sam Houston State University, The University of Miami and the University of Texas at San Antonio. He is also an acclaimed author, having penned stellar biographies on such jazz greats as Stan Kenton, Bill Evans and Maynard Ferguson. What is not so well known about Dr. Lee is that he actually gigged with Charlie Parker back in 1950 when he was a 21-year-old aspiring pianist, fresh from North Texas State University and eager to get his feet wet on the New York jazz scene. And he couldn't have fallen into a more eye-opening situation than to be sharing the bandstand with the fabled Bird. "I was lucky to be around when all that was happening," says the 72-year-old Dr. Lee in retrospect. "It was a really magical time." Bill was a big Bud Powell fan back then, which put him in good stead for his fateful encounter with Bird that summer of '50. As he recalls, "I met Charlie Parker at Caf Society, which was at 2 Sheridan Square in Greenwich Village. I introduced myself

during intermission and later he called me up to play. We ended up gigging together there briefly. For me, it was great introduction to the whole scene." Dr. Lee was living in the basement of the William Henry Hotel on 126th Street at the time he encountered Bird. "In those days Harlem was cool but the Village was not," he says. "Most people wouldn't go to the Village in 1950 because there was a lot of crooks and gangster types living there. But Harlem was always cool and I used to play a lot up there in those days." During the early '50s, Dr. Lee also gigged at Birdland, The Apollo Theatre and Bop City with the likes of Gene Krupa, Artie Shaw, Howard McGhee, Gerry Mulligan and Red Rodney, though his memories of playing with Bird at Cafe Society remain some of his most cherished. "People now don't realize the impact that Bird had on players. They think that John Coltrane was a big change in the music or that Thelonious Monk ushered in something new. But the change between Dixieland and bebop is hard to explain. The feeling, the chord changes, the investigation of the melodies, the chops...oh migosh! Bird just seemed like he came out of nowhere. Oh, it was frightening! He literally blew people away." In deciding to re-examine several classic Parker vehicles, some of which he played with Bird himself 50 years ago, Dr. Lee called on his famous son Will, the longstanding house bassist for CBS' "Late Show With David Letterman" and an in-demand session player and vocalist since the '70s. Will, in turn, called on a crew of colleagues and close friends who just happen to represent the cream of New York's crop -- Michael Brecker on tenor sax and his brother Randy on trumpet, Lew Soloff on trumpet, Warren Chiasson on vibes, John Tropea on guitar, Billy Hart on drums and vocalist Bob Dorough. Together they convey a sense of spirited comraderie, old school charm and in-the-moment exuberance on chops-busting Bird anthems like "Confirmation," "Ornithology," "Anthropology" and "Donna Lee." The opener, "Confirmation," kicks off with a boppish fanfare from Michael Brecker as if to herald the oft-repeated sentiment that "Bird Lives!" Following that initial burst from Brecker's tenor, the band settles into an easy-grooving mid tempo romp with Billy Hart setting a relaxed tone alongside Will's steady walking 4/4. Dr. Lee's agile comping provides a harmonic tether for Michael's heroic tenor work, which soars to some exhilarating double-timed heights during his Bird-like improvisation. Next up, trumpeters Randy and Lew take center stage on a rousing rendition of Bird's bluesy "Now's The Time." After negotiating the familiar head (a catchy melodic nugget which would later be reprised as the '50s pop hit "The Hucklebuck"), Brecker and Soloff each take a turn at extended soloing. Soloff goes first, bristling with energy and bravura chops. Brecker follows with a more deliberate approach, smearing the occasional note while sailing briskly and cleanly over the

changes. Dr. Lee answers with a frisky piano solo of his own marked by mercurial right hand runs and adamant left hand stabs. There's some spirited trading of eights between the two great trumpeters before returning to the buoyant "Hucklebuck" head....and out. Vocalese marvel Bob Dorough makes his presence felt with typical ebullience, spreading the good word about Bird on the boppish anthem "Charles Yardbird Parker Was His Name (Yardbird Suite)." A former schoolmate of Dr. Lee's back at North Texas State University (Class of '49), Dorough makes his allegiances clear as he eulogies Bird in song. Vibist Warren Chiasson enlivens this track with a sparkling solo and some brisk exchanges with drummer Hart. Dorough, the eternal hipster, contributes some wildy uninhibited scatting and some heated exchanges of his own with Hart. Dr. Lee's piano solo here rises to the occasion of this spirited studio romp. On "Ornithology," a Parker tune based on the chord changes to the jazz standard "How High The Moon," Dr. Lee displays a keen sense of harmony and a solid sense of comping here along with a slightly eccentric left hand that at times recalls Thelonious Monk and a quicksilver right hand that is informed by Bud Powell and Oscar Peterson. Randy Brecker's trumpet work here is pure of tone and swinging from start to finish. Vibist Chiasson returns to front a mellow, calypso flavored reading of Bird's "My Little Suede Shoes" and then Soloff glides his way through the challenging "Cheryl," nonchalantly showcasing his remarkable facility along the way. Guitarist John Tropea leads the way on a swinging uptempo blues romp, "Au Privave." Following a burning Charlie Christian flavored solo by Tropea, Dr. Lee jumps into the fray with another frisky two-fisted piano solo in which he slyly tosses off a polka quote. Will responds in kind to the rollicking vibe of the track with his one of only two bass solos on the project. On the other side of the dynamic coin is an intimate duet of "Lover Man," Billie Holiday's melancholy signature piece, pairing Dr. Lee's lush piano voicings with Soloff's haunting muted trumpet. Their stirring, unhurried reading provides for some of the most moving moments on BirdHouse . After Dr. Lee's solo piano intro alluding to "Back Home In Indiana," the band jumps on Parker's "Donna Lee," the bop anthem based on that same tune. Guitarist Tropea and trumpeter Soloff run stride-for-stride through the tricky unison head with aplomb before yielding to Tropea's nimble, bluesy solo. Lew follows with a typically compelling solo, starting briskly on muted trumpet before removing the mute and kicking into his patented high note mode with a touch of Armstrong swagger to boot. The trio of Dr. Lee, Will and Billy Hart is augmented by vibist Chiasson for a faithful version of Tadd Dameron's bop staple, "Hot House," which has Bill sneaking in another polka quote in the middle of his solo. And Dorough returns to pay another loving tribute to Bird in

delivering Sheila Jordan's lyrics set to Parker's "Quasimodo." The swinging collection closes on an upbeat note with "Anthropology," another vehicle for Michael Brecker's astounding tenor work which also features a stunning solo contribution from trumpeter Soloff. Bill's bouncy solo here reflects the fun that this crew was having in the studio on this particular day. And drummer extraordinaire Hart elevates the proceedings with his brisk, buoyant and interactive touch. Throughout BirdHouse, Bill exhibits an obvious love for this music he grew up with. His playing is confident, full of ideas, frisky at times and in the case of "Lover Man," resounding with deep-seated feeling. In summing up this heartfelt father-son Bird tribute, Will says, "Dad's whole life has been spent being a music educator, so it's really cool that he's taken on this role of doing what his first love has always been, just playing." And he's still swinging after all these years. Bill Milkowski Bill Milkowski is a regular contributor to Jazz Times magazine. He is also the author of "JACO: The Extraordinary and Tragic Life of Jaco Pastorius" (Miller Freeman Books) and "Swing It! An Annotated History of Jive" (Billboard Books) [NOTE: PLEASE PURCHASE BIRDHOUSE THROUGH CDBABY.COM *ONLY* IF YOU ARE A US RESIDENT! IF YOU ARE OUTSIDE OF THE US, PLEASE VISIT WILL'S WEBSITE FOR INFORMATION ON YOUR LOCAL DISTRIBUTOR. THANKS!]

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