

Mp3 Ron Miles - Heaven



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12 Trumpet and Guitar duets spanning from Thelonious Monk to Hank Williams Sr. to creative originals. 12 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Free Jazz Details: When you hear "Jazz Duo," you most likely conjure memories not of the modern day, but of classic sessions from years past. Very possibly of Bill Evans and Jim Hall: beautifully impressionistic and lyrical outings that explore the intimacy of this particular musical situation in which master musicians are placed. Or perhaps your memory leads you to the rowdier jousting of Eddie Lang and Joe Venuti, or Charlie Haden and Ornette Coleman. Either way, historically, trumpets are rare in the intimate duo setting. That may be, but Denver-based trumpeter Ron Miles fits perfectly into the tradition, as he proves with his gorgeous new Heaven. Released on Boulder, Colorado's Sterling Circle and produced by Mickey Houlihan, the CD is Miles' sixth recording as a leader and his first set of duets. Joining Miles on this important session is the fabulously versatile Bill Frisell, who himself enlisted the trumpeter for his 1996 Quartet (Nonesuch). The pair, who are old friends as much as musical partners, wastes no time with formalities, picking right up on Miles' multi-hued discography, opening the session with "Just Married," mixing atmospherics and forward motion in meaty fashion. A duo recording had always been bandied about by both musicians, and in its aftermath it's as enjoyable for Miles and Frisell as it will be for those who end up with Heaven in their CD collection. Miles says of his co-conspirator: "Bill's sound is so special and open. He is a very generous player, but also strong. I think we share a fondness for striking melody, patience and the importance of individual timbre." All throughout, Heaven mixes up the instruments' roles, with Frisell often shaping a tune and Miles coloring in broad, patient, thick strokes of deep color. Tune selections are carefully mixed-about as well - nodding to Monk on a dizzy "We See" and then twanging away on Hank Williams' "Your Cheatin' Heart." Then there are duo takes on Jelly Roll Morton's aptly named "King Porter Stomp" and Bob Dylan's "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall," both

which perfectly and naturally sparkle, gleam, and jostle. "We both wanted to do 'We See,'" Miles recalls. "As I recall, I chose 'Heaven' and 'King Porter Stomp.' 'King Porter' was on a record with King Oliver and Jelly Roll Morton, so it seemed like a good duo choice. And Bill suggested 'Hard Rain' and 'Cheatin' Heart.'" These intricate musical shifts in mood and melody are the contours that define how Miles thinks as a composer. In the past he's written "Cobain," a tribute to Nirvana's late singer, and "Howard Beach," a meditation on the troubled New York community. Always, the presence of straight-up jazz modalities and moods find themselves rubbing against a catholic view of the American musical continuum, which permeates Heaven. At once the album sounds like Frisell and Miles played the tunes in one familiar, knowing take and also as if they agonized over perfecting every detail. The truth, of course, is somewhere in-between. Frisell fondly remembers the recording process: "The session itself was effortless in a way. Ron and Mickey really set up the circumstances so it would be really easy for us to play. We didn't even use headphones. Nothing was forced, we just * played *. It was two guys sitting in a room playing, and we didn't try to turn it into something bigger or smaller than what it was. It just felt really good." Ron Miles' latest set, and all his sessions, have stayed rock solidly on the track laid down by Charles Mingus, mixing church and nightclub potently on 1989's Witness, which proved that even as the neo-conservative movement was in full flourish the flange between the straight-ahead and the hyper-creative was fluid and prosperous. By the time Miles showed up on the adventurous Gramavision label - too many years later in 1996, eventually releasing two CDs for the label - he'd expanded his horizons. 1996's My Cruel Heart found Miles running down tunes with an expanded, three-guitar octet and then reveling in a lean, pouncing bass-drums-trumpet trio. It's there and on Frisell's Quartet that you hear how sublimely the trumpet and guitar can weave together, as they do on Heaven. You think of the guitar, especially in Frisell's hands, as the gauze, the trumpet as the fat marker stepping out to mark the shape of a tune. Harking back to his stint with the Duke Ellington Orchestra, where Miles ended up in the early 1990s, Heaven is anchored by Ellington's title track. But the stop off at Ellingtonia comes in light of Miles' recent stints in drummer Ginger Baker's Denver-based bands, with avant-jazz power trio Harriet Tubman, and with clarinetist Don Byron's sextet (with which he is currently on tour). The blues, gospel, dusty folk, bebop, and all manners of post-bop angle for position-a process both musicians clearly adore. And why not: they have a unique comfort, these two. Frisell's a legend in his own time: elliptical, ever-present, restless, immediately identifiable. Miles is a staple of the Denver jazz scene even while touring Europe

and being treated to global travels with a variety of bands. He's also a family man, an associate professor at Denver's Metropolitan State College, and, by all accounts a musical lightning rod that gave, in just one example, Ginger Baker's 1999 *Coward of the County* (his last album before relocating to South Africa) not only the title track but also colorfully-detailed arranging, his tell-tale trumpet, and far more. Miles revisits "Coward" on track two, just as *Heaven* clicks into gear. And in gear *Heaven* stays, through Frisell's gentle, heartfelt "Ron Miles," to Miles' own "Beautiful" and the lyrical "Close." Far beyond a simple meeting of two musical minds, Miles' first duo outing is a reunion of dear friends, expressing themselves emotionally, through sound. Shaking hands and patting each other on the back after months of waiting to see each other in person. You can feel it, in-between the notes. "What is so exciting about Ron," says Frisell, "Is that he really has his own voice. It seems like everything that is going on right now is either very conservative or it rejects everything. Ron has found a way to include everything and not reject things, and still be his own person." High praise indeed, from one of the world's most admired and respected musical individualists. More than just a long-overdue meeting of two unique musical minds, *Heaven* is a little slice of the great beyond for music fans of all stripes, right here on Earth.

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