

Mp3 Ed Harlow - First Encounter



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Gutsy trumpet, tenor sax, and trombone jazz. 9 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Traditional Jazz Combo, JAZZ: Bebop

Details: South Look/Mariner Newspapers CD title: First Encounter By Matt Whorf March 24, 1999 Ed Harlow had made on promise for his First Encounter with the jazz CD-buying public, to take acoustic jazz to a newer place without hurting your ears. Far from "hurting your ears," and without even getting into the subject of what acoustic jazz artists of the past and present have managed to have that particular effect (we know that more that a few electric jazz people have, often intentionally so), Harlow on his newly released independent solo debut CD, First Encounter, lives up to the aforementioned tag line well by achieving just the opposite result. The tenor saxophonist and Marshfield native delivers unplugged-jazz quartet and sextet grooves that are pleasing, soothing, soulful and energizing. But perhaps most importantly, after many years of Harlow's honing his chops in bands such as the Ken Hadley big Band locally, and the Glenn Miller and Artie Shaw Orchestras nationally and globally, the saxophonist's debut disc brings him to the juncture where he is finding his own voice as a bandleader and jazz artist. First Encounter is a showcase of just the kind of small-combo, craftsman-like acoustic jazz Harlow has had in mind right from the beginning. "I Wanted to put together a band like the classic Art Blakey groups of the '50s and '60s," said Harlow of one of his main influences, the fondly recalled ensembles led by the late jazz drumming/percussion master that featured such well-noted tenor players as Johnny Griffin and Jackie MacLean and later helped introduce such current-era sax greats as Branford Marsalis. "My current band, which is essentially the same musicians that appear on the CD, started off pretty much like that. But then we started adding ideas that we've taken from Duke Ellington and others. Basically, our focus is on writing three- and four-part harmony charts for a band with three horns, sometimes composing four-part interpretations of what three horns would do. "It's all part of our approach to test the strengths

and limitations of the band format," Harlow said. But Harlow, like his fellow horn-touters in the band, also likes to break from the harmony structure of the group's performance pieces and solo prodigiously, and like all sax players, he cites his major influences here as well. Said Harlow, "From my personal point of view as a soloist, I like Branford Marsalis a lot. I think his playing shares a lot in common with a Boston-area player named George Garzone, who is a friend of mine and has led a trio call the Fringe since the late 60s. They both just have that real cut-loose, edgy sort of playing style. And I've always liked Wayne Shorter, Sonny Rollins and especially Stan Getz. I just think that no one could soar on a ballad like he could. Harlow, 34, is a 1982 graduate of Marshfield High School and began playing saxophone when he was 14. Following graduation, he headed off to study music at North Texas State University, returning home to Boston four years later to play with local groups and then earn a Performance Bachelor of Music at New England Conservatory. Aside from the Hadley, Miller and Shaw bands, Harlow's performing experience includes off-and-on work with a blues band called the Jim Bogus Crew, who frequented clubs such a Cambridge's Black Rose and Everett's Stadium Cafe from 1990 to '94, and a traditional Haitian jazz/folk band, Volo Volo, whose sound the saxophonist describes as "more African than Caribbean." You also may have unknowingly spotted Harlow in the orchestra pit at the South Shore Music Circus in the backup band for one of the Temptations/Four Tops oldies revues of recent years. Except, of course, for his current gig, the musical venture that Harlow values the most is his stint with the Glenn Miller Orchestra from October '89 to May '90. "It was my first heavy-duty professional experience," said the saxophonist. "this was, of course, a sort of ghost band of the classic Miller Orchestra of the 40s. But we went all over the United States and Canada, and it was amazing how many people were still into this music and came out to the shows. We went to Japan too and we were very popular there. We'd play for 5,000 people in big halls, and unlike in the States, we'd get an equal mix of older and younger listeners, people in general who thought of it as this sort of cool American thing. Altogether, I think I learned how to play a lot better out of the whole thing." On First Encounter, Harlow and his bandmates offer a tasteful mix of solid, uptempo bebop-meets-funk stomps and smooth, intimate ballads. Faster Harlow-penned showcases such as "Funky Dwelling" and "After Ten" feature robust solo trading-off by the horn players, while intriguing ballad choices like Wayne Shorter's "Fall" and the theme from the 60s James Bond movie, "You Only Live Twice," demonstrate the band's versatility with the easier-going numbers. The disc also features some fine sideman players, including trumpeter and Hingham resident

Phil Grenadier. The rest of the band, including members on trombone, piano, bass and drums, all live in Boston. In addition to his performing role, Harlow has overseen numerous other production aspect of his disc effort, a point on which he takes a certain pride. Said Harlow, "On this CD, I was very fortunate to have such a great band for very little money. But I also ran into some snags that kept the disc from coming out when it was supposed to. As a musician working on a project, you like to focus on the music, but the business side can be very overwhelming. I've had a spend a lot of time taking care of stuff like pictures, graphic arts, logos and painting for the whole CD package. And I'm still not able to distribute the disc until we get the bar-code done. I've only been able to press 1000 copies which we can only sell at gigs. But still, by doing most of this work myself, I like the fact that no one else owns a part of this CD." Harlow said he would like to begin recording again within the next six months.

----- Cadence The Review of Jazz Blues: Creative Improvised Music
CD title: First Encounter by Frank Rubolino June 1999 Spirited music with a lot of bounce and a touch of humor is on tap from Harlow. He uses as ammunition a full-sounding front line of tenor, trumpet and trombone on the majority of the songs, firing off upbeat struts, Silver-ish funks, bopish rogues, and mournful slow-walks. the group starts in a groove and maintains the jaunty pace through the compositions that feature plenty of group dynamics and individual expression. Although this is his initial recording as a leader, Harlow appears to have already paid some dues both in the formal classroom and on the road with the big band pros. This exposure has prepared him well for fronting his own band. Focusing primarily on his own compositions, the band glides through his arrangements and into the improvised arena with a spring in their step. Trumpeter Grenadier adds to the high-stepping posture with his fluid playing, bantering with Harlow in numerous playful scenarios. While the full sextet is the dominant sound, Harlow takes the line horn route on several of the songs. He exudes a mellow tenor tone, one that flows easily from the horn without harshness of brittleness. His improvisations on the changes of "You Only Live Twice," combined with the deep-toned rhythms from Robinson and DeKrom, give the movie song a different sensuality. Constantly prodding Harlow on all other pieces is pianist Burk. Hew comps behind Harlow's solos or takes a personal lead in sustaining the momentum. First encounters with the recording world are not always successful for young musicians, but Harlow has overcome many of the pitfalls through his playing, arranging, and composing. He appears to be a survivor of this first skirmish.

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