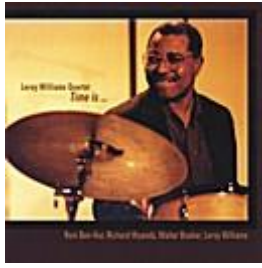


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"Leroy Williams makes the drum kit sing and sigh and dance in a coat of many colors." 8 MP3 Songs

JAZZ: Bebop Details: (the liner notes from Time is. . . Robert G. O'Meally is director of the Center for Jazz Studies, Columbia University. All Night to Play This superb recording represents what might be called a gesture toward perfection. This is the case because the session's leader, Leroy Williams, put aside the commercial incentives typically driving today's musical productions and opted instead to do everything he could simply to create the best possible music. This is Williams first recording as a leader. For Leroy Williams is one of the most brilliant drummers in New York, and has recorded with some of the most famous names ever to play jazz: He has been Barry Harris's drummer of choice for over thirty years and has also made records with Buddy Tate, Sonny Stitt, Earl Coleman, Hank Mobley, Charles McPherson, Slide Hampton, Andrew Hill, Junior Cook, and Bill Hardman. Some of the great ones he played with but did not record with include Thelonious Monk, Johnny Griffin, Sonny Rollins, Jimmy Heath, and Ray Bryant. And there are many others including Elmo Hope, a sparkling sextet created to play the music of Elmo Hope. What has made Williams such an appealing percussionist, I believe, is that he is such a highly musical player-one whose sound is rich and whose sense of time is perfect. "There are so many drummers," the composer Hale Smith once said to me as we listened to a young drummer slamming in and out of tempo, "and so little time!" Williams's time is authoritative and relentlessly swinging--true to the music's dance-floor origins. Stanley Crouch: "Leroy Williams's placement of the beat allows the other musicians to play in front of it or behind it without losing the flow. He always has that drive but never makes the drums an obstacle. And he can play brushes so smoothly, too, almost a lost art nowadays." It's as if Leroy Williams always has in mind Baby Dodds's credo that the drummer's job is to keep the band in good spirits-to block evil spirits while keeping everybody, on the bandstand and out front, too, in a mood

to enjoy themselves. As the master of the flow of time, Williams keeps the jazz train moving and opens the door for his comrades in a way that seems to say "Man, I never heard you play that before. That's beautiful!" Furthermore, Williams is a complete drummer who uses all the various elements of this most American of instruments-tom-toms from China, cymbals from Turkey, snare drum from Europe, bells and blocks from Africa-as if they were keys and pedals on a piano. Note in particular his brush-work and uses of the bass drum-all part of the master-drummer's integrated music-kit: the dream machine that makes the sound of surprise. Williams makes the kit sing and sigh and dance in a coat of many colors. "You need to see the beat," he said to a group of students at Columbia University last year, encouraging them to attend "live" music in concerts or clubs, to watch the music-makers in action. Even on record, Williams makes the beat so vivid that you not only feel its power but also visualize its lines and colors: you see the music. Williams's first gigs included work with bassist Wilbur Ware, who was his most important early mentor. When Williams came to New York in 1967, Ware was already there. It was Wilbur who hooked me up with Hank Mobley in New York. In the summer of 1970 Wilbur recommended Williams to play with Thelonious Monk, whose regular band had just broken up. "Come on, man," Wilbur had said, "are you ready?!" With Monk, Williams played a week at the Village Vanguard, a week in Raleigh, and then a scattering of jobs around Manhattan. "I learned a lot just watching Monk, and from the few things he would tell me directly," said Williams. "He dug my time, but one night, maybe I was trying to show too much technique, and he turned to me and said, 'We've got all night to play.' I learned from that to make everything I did play count for something." "I think that's the difference between the younger players and some of the older musicians," Williams told me. "I heard things directly from the source. I heard Pres and Papa Jo and Hawk and Kenny Clarke. So I can bring the message from them more directly. I listen to early records I made with Mobley and the rest; and I can tell it's me. But as time has gone on, I've become more of a full player. I can hear references to all I've listened to; and I recognize my sound as a more complete sound, a more mature sound. I've learned to hold back more. I'm a two-chorus soloist most of the time. We've got all night to play." For this date, Williams picked the studio and the engineer he wanted. "And we didn't play in booths this time. We need to hear each other and see each other. I think it gives a more live sound. And there were false-starts and first-takes, which of course we cut, but no multi-tracking and no overdubbing. What you hear on this record is what we played that day, no tricks. We didn't pull the drums up front or anything like that. We're all equal on this date, one front line-all

swinging." The result is that you hear the sticks-on-metal of the drum, the steel string-on-wood of the bass and guitar; you hear the slight vocalizations of Williams as he plays, keeping spirits bright as the band's furnace churns. Here, by the way is not the perfection of the clock radio but of the human body. Here is what John Ruskin called the "beauty of imperfection": all the extra sounds-usually heard only by the musicians themselves or by those up front at an intimate club-- are part of what makes this music so personal and valuable, so Leroy Williams-beautiful.

***** This is a true quartet album, not simply a feature for Leroy Williams. The perfect match for Williams is Richard Wyands, whose touch is reminiscent of Hank Jones's-gentle as if testing the cool surface of a mountain lake. Wyands is one of the piano-masters who has been overlooked perhaps because he is so subtle: melodic, swinging, bluesy. (Check out his solo on Our Delight). Walter Booker is another veteran of the music: part of a long line of great bassists including Jimmy Blanton and Oscar Pettiford; fabulous for the fullness of his sound, reverberating through the meter and resonating through the band. Soulful Ronnie Ben-Hur, the brilliant youngster in this fast company, was described by Gary Giddins as "a guitarist with a low flame burning in every note." ++++++ "For this set," says Williams, "I picked works by my favorite composers, and then threw in two of my own." Charlie Parker's deep-dished 12-bar Back Home Blues announces the intention to swing: to pass the ball around, dribble, pass again, fake a shot, pass again for an easy one on the inside. The solos represent team-work, too, statements that fit with the action of the other players on the floor: the swinging exchanges recall Bird but have their own angles of ascent. The word "rhythm" means, in its roots, "to flow." These Back Home Blues flow. Nutty flows, too, in a more lyrical dance than that those usually led by its composer, Thelonious Monk. "For this one I asked Richard to play like Coltrane," who recorded this with Monk in a classic version, circa 1957. "Like Coltrane?!" said Wyands, as if he were asked to do the impossible. Fascinating to know this as we listen to Wyands spin the braided and crushed notes with the saxophonist in mind, as Williams provides the gentle buoyancy while reminding everyone of the earth from which we all come: The bottom line. Ben-Hur also swings with a Monkish sense of space and time. Williams's first original of the set, My Rosita, sounds like a standard already. "People always expect the drummer to be thinking wham, bam, boop, the race-horse; but I love Pres, too! I want the music to be pretty. This is kind of a Latin thing, but I wanted it to sing. I've worked with plenty of singers, and like to

give them what they need, but I like to sing, too, with my drum-set." With Impressions we come to the CD's most emphatically intense, up-tempo piece, this one by written by Coltrane. Remember that the Chicago Williams grew up in was home to blues and bebop artists as well as to those who eventually would play with Sun Ra and the A.A.C. M., the experimental players. Like many others, Williams did a turn through all these categories. "In Trane's work I love that cry," Williams told me. "And I love the way he tells the story. It's all the same story, anyhow; that same pulse underneath. Know what I mean?" Just for You is Williams's slow ballad, another standard in the making. "The melody just showed up late one night, it just came," he said. "I want somebody to give me lyrics for this one and for My Rosita. Just for You is blue lights in a dark room, a glass of nice wine, and somebody special." Focus on Williams's slow-dance brush-work, delicately caressing the piece and holding it together. The classic 1940's anthem by Tad Dameron, Our Delight, offers another beautiful melodic line to the set. Williams's intricate work with brushes is featured in an up-tempo groove that makes way for his subtly melodic, talking-drum solo which, true to Dameron's design, is as attentive to leaving space (with its own continuing pulses) as to filling it in. Back When is an attractively lilting line by Roni Ben-Hur, whose family emigrated from his native Israel to Tunisia, and who was raised with the sounds of North African and Sephardic Jewish melodies all around him. "What typified the music I grew up with was its rhythmic character and room for improvised musical expression. At my very first introduction to jazz, I was struck by its similarity to the North African Jewish music I'd heard at home, but even more fascinated by the harmonic lushness and freedom of expression jazz offers in the way it pushes traditional musical boundaries." Milestones brings us back to Charlie Parker-and to Miles Davis who wrote this and recorded it with Bird (this is a earlier piece, not the more famous "Milestones," recorded by Miles's in 1958)--and to a groove that characterizes this whole CD: relaxed, strong, and steady. Note here the many-layered exchange of Williams and Wyands, and the bluesy bass solo by Booker. And note here and elsewhere the thickness of the textures of sound and yet the lightness of the ensemble's carriage. Dexter Gordon used the word bebop to mean good luck, anything good, blessings. This Milestone is bebop! To keep the good times rolling, hit replay and keep this one, and the whole album, bebopping in a good luck-loop. All in a gesture toward perfection-or should I say: a gesture toward the beauty of imperfection. Leroy Williams-Vita Leroy Williams was born in Chicago Illinois. His mother played the piano in the church in which he rescued a set of drums where his grandfather was the pastor. Leroy is self-taught but he did study with Oliver Coleman

for a few months when he was eighteen years of age. In his hometown of Chicago, he worked with local musicians including bassist, Wilbur Ware, saxophonist, Eddie Harris and Jack DeJohnette who was playing piano at the time. He also worked with pianist, Judy Roberts at the London House as the house trio. He came to New York in 1967 and has played and recorded with Barry Harris, Sonny Stitt, James Moody, Ray Bryant, Thelonious Monk and many others. He has toured extensively throughout Europe and Japan and most recently in Africa. Leroy's favorite drummers are Max Roach, Art Blakey, Philly Joe Jones and Kenny Clark Professional Work Experience 1969 - present Barry Harris - Extensive tours and recordings 1969 - present Charles McPherson - Tours and recordings 1980 - present Richard Wyands - Extensive tours and recordings 1981 - present Jimmy Slyde - Concerts 1980 - Present Dewey Redman European and American tours 1989 - present Tardo Hammer - Tours and recordings 1992 - present Pete Malinverni - Tours and recordings 1996 - present Elmolenium - Tours and 1980 - 1989 Bill Hardman - Junior Cook Quintet Extensive tours and recordings 1974 - 1996 Andrew Hill - Tours and recordings 1980 - 1983 Sllide Hampton - Tours and recordings 1983 Teddy Wilson - Concert 1976 - 1980 Al Cohn - Extensive tours and recordings 1979 Bob Brookmeyer - European Tour 1982 Buddy Tate - Recording 1981 - 1983 Charles Rouse - Lonnie Hillyer Quintet - Tours 1981 - 1983 Red Rodney - Recordings and Tours 1982 - 1983 Lee Konitz - American tours and recording 1979 Johnny Griffin - European tour 1974 - 1982 Clifford Jordan - Tours 1979 - 1981 Pepper Adams - Tours and recordings 1978 Jimmy Heath - Caribbean tour 1978 - 1982 Earl Coleman - Tours and recordings 1974 Jimmy Rowles - Recording 1972 - 1984 Sonny Stitt - Recording 1972 - 1973 Ray Bryant - American tours 1971 - 1973 Hank Mobley - Tours and recordings 1971 - 1972 Woody Shaw - Concerts 1970 - 1971 Stan Getz - Tours 1970 Dizzy Gillespie - Tours 1970 Thelonious Monk - Tours 1969 - 1970 Sonny Rollins - American

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