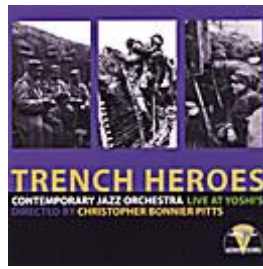


# Mp3 Contemporary Jazz Orchestra - Trench Heroes



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Give the best musicians in SF a Monday night to blow their brains out and this is what you get. 8 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Bebop, JAZZ: Big Band Details: This recording is dedicated to the late great saxophone masters Sam Sanders and Joe Henderson. Trench Heroes These Times are strange times. We know the planet is in trouble, our children are at risk, and we need to do better. But often we don't know whom or what to trust. Who offers true inspiration and leadership? What we see, more often than not, is not what we get. Yesterdays heroes, from Columbus to presidents are being revealed as less-than-worthy of our worship. We seek mentors and role models to guide us -- maybe we need to start looking more closely in our own backyards. Perhaps the only good to emerge from the horrible events surrounding 9/11 is that a light has been cast upon the dedicated, honest and spirited souls who fight on in anonymity. Those individuals not seeking fame, fortune, our vote, or even our attention, but who reliably and dependably show up to do their best are real trench heroes! I've recently found quite a few trench heroes at my daughters preschool -- teachers, underpaid and under appreciated, seeking a moment when all their skill, knowledge and experience succeed in turning on a child's light bulb. Musicians and teachers have much in common - often they are both. Musicians practice endlessly to hone their talent, show up to the gig for little money and play their heart out as honestly as possible, seeking that moment when their craftsmanship fades away and something inside lights up and propels their expression into another realm. Recording circumstances As has been the case for the last 6 years, I had another late Monday night at Pearls nightclub in San Francisco's popular North Beach district leading the CJO. Early next morning, I did a radio interview with Alicia Clancy of KCSM. We talked about the band's endurance and our premiere that night at the world-famous Yoshis jazz club in Oakland. Since the sound check wasn't until later that afternoon, I figured I could catch up on some desperately needed sleep after the interview. Having driven

across the San Mateo Bridge to the legendary club before to catch the likes of McCoy Tyner, Kenny Garrett, and Joe Henderson, I knew 90 minutes was plenty of time. It wasn't until I found myself inching across the bridge in rush hour traffic that a sinking feeling started to take hold. When I finally arrived, little time was left before the scheduled downbeat. As I quickly wrote out a solo order for the sound engineer, I heard the band being announced. Horn in hand; snapping my fingers to give everybody the groove, I counted off the band. This moment is akin to leaping into an abyss -- often the first notes can tell you if the band is going to fly, or spend the entire night picking itself off the ground. Some bandleaders choose material that permits the band to safely ease into the music, progressing gently into more intense music. However I never met any of those leaders while I was coming up in Detroit - Do or Die, they would say. While playing jazz, as Miles put it, is the most fun you can have with your clothes on, it is serious business. It requires some bravery, because if you are truly trying to play something new, stretching yourself to the limits and beyond, you risk failure; embarrassing train wrecks, or worst of all, loss of the thread --musical death. The air needs to crackle; the music should sizzle with excitement and suspense. So I believe music, like life, should be approached fearlessly. The band hit the first notes and the rest is what is captured on this recording. Slop According to John Handy, Mingus put two tunes together for a dance project. You may recognize part of it as Better get hit in your soul. Mingus is a true musical hero. His music captures the soul, humor and simplicity that makes the music unpretentious, exciting, and great fun. Make no mistake, his music can be as complex and demanding as any. His music is just right for the CJO. Eric Crystal sets the pace with his inventive and twisting solo. Eric is also one of my heroes he gives all he has to every performance, he's not afraid to take chances, consistently turns out great solos, and is a humble, intelligent human being. As it turns out, the cuts included on this CD feature him quite a bit so you will get a chance to hear what I mean. Marty Wehner is one of SF's great trombonists and can often be heard with his band Mingus Amungus. I was surprised to find so many great trombonists in SF and found it one of the great pleasures of our Monday nights was to let each of them stretch out and let them tell their stories. John Wiitalla is truly a fine bassists and he set the pace for all bassists to come in the band after him. BuddyT Chuck MacKinnon left the band a few years ago and moved to New York, something all jazz musicians have to do at some point. He composed and arranged this piece as well as These Times and takes a fine solo on it as well. He is just starting to tap into his talent as a trumpeter and as a composer. You can tell that he has been listening to the great hard boppers like Freddie, Woody,

Lee and Clifford. As he further develops his composing chops, he will follow in the footsteps of the great Thad Jones. Eric Crystal also takes another outstanding solo. Going to Chicago Duane Lawrence is another real hero. He showed up the first night the band played at Pearls and wanted to sit in. You want to see an interesting set of expressions, go up to any band and announce you are a vocalist and would like to sit in. The first thing is that look of please go away followed by musicians looking at each other with oh brother, another one! and is this the person who hired us? The best thing is to have someone in the band vouch for you. In Duane's case, half the band vouched for him and he also had his own music extremely rare and a good indication of his seriousness. Any musician sitting in has got to shine because the rest the musicians have undergone the equally interesting transformation from being a bunch of swell folks into blood thirsty roman gladiators. It's really wonderful to see the victim turn it around and knock everyone off their feet and Duane has been doing just that every night. A very interesting surprise was the unexpected solo of trumpeter Dave Scott. Dave had been playing lead during Louis Fasmans long hiatus and stepped down into the section for this engagement. Inspired by a combination of elements only he could reveal, Dave jumped in and gave the meanest, nastiest, gut bucket response to Duane's treatment of this Jimmy Rushing/Count Basie standard. City Lights This tune has become a standard for the band since Duane introduced it the first night. This arrangement by Jim Duke never included a saxophone solo until we played it - the mystery saxophone just started playing. It happens that way sometimes and it happens that way a lot in this band. Carol Coates really has written a great tune but anyone who has tried to buy a home in the Bay area recently might have a problem about property priced reasonably to sell! Dissapproachment Frank Foster is another real hero of mine. He's had a long and successful career as a jazz artist boasting one of the strongest voices in post bop composing and arranging. Few people share his level of contribution to the idiom but his name is not very well known. Much like his fellow Detroiter and band mate, Thad Jones, had he not written a note he would still enjoy a reputation as one of the most formidable soloists of his generation. I will never forget the occasions I've performed his music with him. His music contains all the elements; swing, soul, humor, cleverness, love, bebop and blues. Those familiar with Shiny Stockings who have not heard his other side, Dissapproachment will come as a real surprise. It features two of my local heroes, Marty Wehner on trombone and Tod Dickow on tenor saxophone. Self Help is Needed This is one of my favorite pieces by Oliver Nelson. Most folks are familiar with Stolen Moments or his TV themes for the 6 million dollar man, and Ironside. Nelson has a unique

approach to the music which exploits patterns in an unparalleled and amazingly tasteful manner. He obviously understands Duke, swing, and the powerful capabilities of the orchestra. This performance features alto saxophonist, Tony Corman. Tony stayed with the band for two years before moving on and no doubt about it, he too is a trench hero. Besides being an incredibly able lead alto, he always delivers meticulously constructed solos that build logically but contain clever twists. Those attributes, by pure coincidence, easily describe Oliver Nelson's saxophone playing. Bass trombonist Chuck Bennett puts in his two cents. Chuck is another true trench hero, he takes responsibility for filling the bone section every week with the best musicians in the Bay area. After the parade of stellar bone players who have come through the band, I would have to say the SF is a bone town. Never have I seen so many great bone players in one city. I will never forget the first rehearsal of the band where we let the bones stretch out one by one, each turning in great solos. It's not often that every musician in a section is a soloist and even less often they are all exceptional soloists. Body and Soul This is an arrangement by my dear friend Eddie Nuccilli in Detroit. Again, we feature Eric Crystal and young pianist Jacob Semetko. Eddie is unquestionably another trench hero. He has led big bands in the motor city since the late 40s and continues tirelessly today. He has gained legendary status as a creative arranger, steeped in the bebop and post bop tradition. Listen closely to the ensemble sections and you can hear references to Coleman Hawkins. Eddie also has a reputation as an unforgiving stickler for details he hears every note and refuses to let people slack up regardless of where he is performing. I owe him, as do many, a serious debt of gratitude for helping me mature musically under his guidance. He also has graciously shared many of his arrangements with the CJO. These Times This tune is very much like These Times with so many unexpected events and changes. Pay attention to the different sections with solos by Chuck MacKinnon, Eric Crystal, Jacob Semetko and drummer Danny Spencer. I can't say enough about Danny: a world-class musician and one of my all time favorite heroes. Christopher Bonnier Pitts CJO story Performing with a big band is an experience like no other. The exhilaration and energy that comes from an exquisitely rendered ensemble section, spontaneous backgrounds, soloing in front of 18 pieces, and a host of other dramatic, suspenseful surprises just has no equal. After performing and sitting in at various clubs in and around San Francisco, I became acquainted with many of the talented musicians living and working in the Bay area. The time had come for a new Big Band. Sonny Buxton from Pearls thought that a regular Monday night, mirroring the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis big band at the Village Vanguard in New

York, would be possible at the club he managed. The CJO launched on January 2, 1995 and is still going strong today. Check out jazznationfor more. Personnel: Saxophones Christopher Pitts Eric Crystal Tony Corman Tod Dickow Scott Peterson Howard Cespedes Trumpets Louis Fasman Lead Chuck MacKinnon Dave Scott Rolf Johnson Trombones Marty Wehner Mike Rinta Mara Fox Derrick James Chuck Bennett (bass) Danny Spencer Drums John Wiitala Bass Jacob Semetko Piano Duane Lawrence Vocals

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