

For 25 years I taught jazz piano and various other jazz related courses at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ. One of the great pleasures of teaching is coming into contact with extremely gifted young students who are performing on a very high level. With the exception of the pianist, Jim Ridl, all of the players on this recording were either in my keyboard harmony class or in one of the small ensembles that I coached.

One of the things I recall most about each one of these young musicians is their love for and dedication to the music. That love is evident in this recording, *The Mists of Distant Time*.

The first track called KIYOMI'S GARDEN is a composition by saxophonist Scott Robert Avidon in which he reveals a strong, muscular sound and boundless energy. Pianist, Jim Ridl, provides strong support before turning in a wonderfully probing solo. Bassist, Steve Swanson and drummer Edward Taylor prove to be a dynamic team and provide a strong underpinning for the soloists.

BLUES FOR ALEX composed by drummer Edward Taylor is a twelve-bar blues with slightly different harmonic movement. This track serves to introduce trumpeter Terell Stafford to the proceedings. Terell has performed with me on numerous occasions and makes an exceptionally strong showing on this track, as does everyone. The addition of the trumpet in the ensemble gives this piece a sound akin to Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers or the Horace Silver Quintet.

Track 3 is another contribution of drummer Edward Taylor. AT THE WATER'S EDGE is a 5/4 piece with a very haunting melody. The rhythm section plays so loosely that 5/4 sounds like 4/4. The soloists soar over the cushion that the rhythm section provides.

OWEN'S LULLABY by Edward Taylor is a quiet, reflective waltz that is done in a restrained but no less passionate mood. Both pianist Jim Ridl and bassist Steve Swanson take tasteful, probing, thought provoking solos, and drummer Edward Taylor is a study in understatement.

In checking out PRAYING MANTIS by Scott Robert Avidon, I had the inescapable feeling that it sounded familiar. It took several hearings before I realized that this piece used the same chords and chordal movement as Joe Henderson's tune, INNER URGE. Rhythmically, the melody is slightly off-center and has a kind of Asian tinge. Again the rhythm section swings with both power and ease.

At 17 minutes, OYAKO DON by Scott is the longest track on the CD, but it never becomes boring or redundant. There are strong solo contributions from Scott Robert Avidon, from Terell Stafford, Jim Ridl, and a strong solo from drummer Edward Taylor, with bassist Steve Swanson providing an ostinato bass line underneath.

THE MISTS OF DISTANT TIME by Edward Taylor begins with a long, freely improvised piano introduction by Jim Ridl which sets a dark, mysterious mood which then segues into a rhythm section vamp with Scott Robert Avidon joining in to state the melody. With great solos by both Ridl and Avidon, this piece ends the recording by this fantastic young group on a very promising note.

I look forward to hearing much more from Groove Apparatus and when you finish listening to this recording, I'm sure you will too.

Kenny Barron  
May 9, 2006