

JAZZ

BY CHRIS INGHAM



Tommy Smith

★★★★★

Karma SPARTACUS

Scottish saxophonist/composer's 24th album, one of his best.



A TEENAGE jazz prodigy in the early '80s, Tommy Smith studied at Berklee, signed to Blue Note and was lauded as "the most talented sax star to arrive on the world scene in years" by Gary Burton. Now director of the Scottish Youth Jazz Orchestra and a prolific and expansive composer with his own record label, he is as likely to produce an ambitious, large-scale work as lead an edgy, post-bop jazz quartet. *Karma* is the latter. Featuring powerhouse drummer Alyn Cosker, piano/keyboard wizard Steve Hamilton and virtuoso six-string bassist Kevin Glasgow, the album blends tough fusion with gentler Irish, Scottish, Japanese and Arabic folk flavours to produce music of a distinctive and intriguing identity. Smith and co juxtapose moments of taut, punchy impressiveness (Cause And Effect, Good Deed) alongside the elegiac and moving (Land Of Heroes) with the swaggering panache and delicate nuance of masters.

ALSO RELEASED

Gretchen Parlato

★★★★★

The Lost And Found

OBLIQU SOUND



A jazz singer unlike any other, Parlato eschews grandstanding scat and soul-drenched paraphrasing with an understated, murmuring quality which rather belies her originality and invention. This compelling set has her illuminating Wayne Shorter (JuJu), Bill Evans (Blue In Green) and Simply Red (Holding Back The Years) in a unique, mysterious light.

The Impossible Gentlemen

★★★★★

The Impossible Gentlemen BASHO

An all-star group centred on the remarkable guitarist/composer Mike Walker and featuring Gwilym Simcock (piano), Steve Swallow (bass) and Adam Nussbaum (drums). The IG is superbly named for their refined, elegant chops. Invention, wit and dazzling precision in abundance, this is a very special band.

Warren Vaché, Alan Barnes And The Woodville All-Stars

★★★★★

The London Session

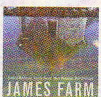
WOODVILLE

Several steps back from the cutting edge, the Alan Barnes brand of melodic mainstream as heard on his Woodville label has an irresistible craft and consistency. Here, the multi-reedsman sets mellifluous US cornettist Vaché among choice standards in sumptuous septet settings that are exemplars of taste, economy and swing.

James Farm

★★★★★

James Farm NONESUCH



This quartet blend their skills into a unique, multi-faceted unit. Joshua Redman (sax), Aaron Parks (piano), Matt Penman (bass) and Eric Harland (drums) each submit advanced compositions to the James Farm blend of groove and imagination combined with the sheer joy of jazz. Impressive, entertaining – a new supergroup is born. *CI*

MORO