



Flute on the Edge Jeremy Steig (Steig Music)

Groove Yard

Bradley Leighton (Pacific Coast Jazz)

Ad Infinitum François Richard (Effendi)

by Ken Dryden

For a long time, jazz musicians who played the flute as their primary instrument were fairly rare. In recent years, the number of flutists has grown tremendously including three with new albums: Jeremy Steig, Bradley Leighton and François Richard.

Jeremy Steig has recorded somewhat sporadically as a leader since the '70s. Here, he is accompanied by bassist Cameron Brown, guitarist Vic Juris and drummer Anthony Pinciotti. Steig kicks things off with the brisk, funky original "Mr. Go", building from a repeated motif into a firestorm, simultaneously playing and humming through his instrument, a technique used throughout a good part of the session. Even better are his breezy, humorous "Felonious Funk" (which showcases Juris to good effect) and the subtle ballad "People Dust". Juris switches to acoustic guitar for his wistful "Moonscape", a captivating waltz. The standards are also noteworthy. Although Eric Dolphy's haunting take of "You Don't Know What Love Is" may be the top version of this ballad, Steig's lyrical, vibrato-filled interpretation has a similar sense of adventure. The infectious take of Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Samba De Offeo", though breaking no new ground, will lift anyone's spirits.

Bradley Leighton's *Groove Yard* is a generally successful fusion of bop and Brazilian music. His band includes the seasoned pianist Mike Wofford (adept at working with flutists such as wife Holly Hoffman), bassist Bob Magnusson, drummer Duncan Moore, percussionist Allan Phillips, with arrangements by guitarist Jaime Valle. Playing alto flute on two tunes by Jobim, he shares plenty of solo space with Wofford and Magnusson in the rarely heard "Mojave", though he is almost too subtle in his approach to the better known "Fotographia". Carl Perkins' title track is almost always heard in a driving hardbop setting, so Leighton's lighter Latin-flavored interpretation proves extremely refreshing. His game effort with Wes Montgomery's "Road Song" is a bit derivative of late '60s soul jazz. While a somewhat brief CD at only 42 minutes, it is worth investigating.

François Richard's program is rather ambitious, offering no less than ten originals on this studio date with old friends Geoff Lapp on piano, bassist Frédéric Alarie and drummer Michel Lambert, marking his fifth date as a leader. This classically trained Canadian, who studied with Jean-Pierre Rampal, has got jazz chops to spare. Richard's fluid "Intuition" is an exciting postbop vehicle full of surprising twists. The pretty samba "Rhodium", the haunting "Une Autre Histoire" and Lapp's playful "Scout Boots" are also highlights. Richard switches to alto flute for the melancholy "Between Rain and Clouds" and the introspective "Ad Infinitum". Richard may be an unfamiliar name to many jazz fans from outside Canada, but he, like many fellow Canadians who record for the Effendi label, merits attentive listening.

For more information, visit www.jeremysteig.info, www.pacificcoastjazz.com and www.effendirecords.qc.ca. Steig is at Cornelia Street Café Dec. 9th. See calendar.