

Riccitelli, while no longer playing, was present for all the recording sessions. This most recent project again provided him the chance to work with and record some of his longtime friends, including a former student of his from the late 1940s, tenor saxophonist Joe Stelluti, alongside his talented son Chris, on baritone sax, and Joe's brother Lou on bass. Others on this album include Leo Ursini or Nathan Childers on alto saxophone, Glenn Drewes on trumpet and flugelhorn, Bruce Bonvissuto on trombone, Eddie Monteiro on piano, and accordion, and Tony Tedesco on drums. Four of the seventeen tracks were composed by Riccitelli, and he wrote arrangements for all but one track, which was Tommy Newsom's arrangement for "Maids of Cadiz." Before moving to California to be part of Johnny Carson's Tonight Show Orchestra, Newsom played in Riccitelli's octet.

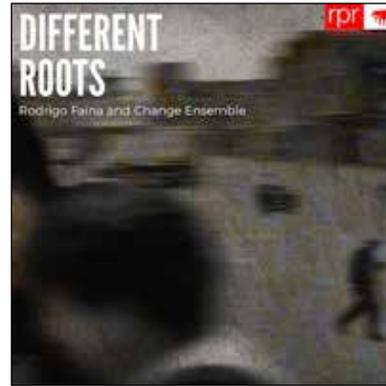
Aside from Riccitelli's four originals, the compositions include some classic jazz standards and songs from the American songbook. These include "I'm Old Fashioned," "If You Could See Me Now," "Stompin' at the Savoy," "Star Eyes," "Mr. Lucky," "Maids of Cadiz," "Along Came Betty," "Darn the Dream" "Dolphin Dance," "Jordu," and "Round Midnight." The octet swings and displays a clean, measured tone in a manner that suggests a fusion of bebop and West Coast cool. This sound is heard on "Riccitelli's "Minor Seven Heaven," which showcases Joe Stelluti's tenor saxophone. Another fascinating original "Blues Dominant" is another feature for Stelluti as well as trombonist Bonvissuto.

It should be noted that the performances are relatively short, ranging from 3 to 5 minutes. Stelluti is also prominent on "I'm Old Fashioned," which has a couple of solo choruses from pianist Monteiro. There is a gorgeous arrangement for Tadd Dameron's "If You Could See Me Now," with memorable solos from Drewes and Chris Stelluti. Chris Stelluti's robust baritone sax is also featured on the hip interpretation of "Serenata." The arrangement of "Stompin' at the Savoy" is a feature for bassist Lou Stelluti with the horns framing his playing. "Star Eyes" has shifting rhythms, tempos, and moods, along with some fiery trumpet from Drewes. Tommy Newsom's arrangement for "Maid of Cadiz" provides for a mesmerizing interplay by the horns before Bonvissuto's brassy solo.

On "Mr. Lucky," Monteiro plays accordion with an organ-like flavor. Drewes' haunting trumpet evokes Clifford Brown on a rendition of Benny Golson's "Along Came Betty." Bonvissuto's reflective trombone is showcased on "Darn That Dream," an arrangement originally written to showcase Eddie Bert. Riccitelli's Arrangements of Duke Jordan's "Jordu" and then Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight" also merit mention using half-time and double-time on the Monk classic, adding spice with the horns providing atmosphere behind Drewes soaring trumpet.

This album is a splendid recording that allows Vinnie Riccitelli and his well-crafted, handsome arrangements to shine. Add the excellent ensemble sound and terrific, focused solos, and one has a jewel of a jazz recording.

Ron Weinstock



RODRIGO FAINA AND CHANGE ENSEMBLE

Different Roots RED PIANO RECORD

Born in the province of Buenos Aires, where he began his musical studies, Rodrigo Faina observes in the liner notes to "Different Roots," "The place where we are born marks us deeply" His early musical education exposed him to teachers with diverse musical interests and viewed jazz "as a way of approaching music and not as dogma or as a closed genre." They instilled his interest in other genres such as tango and bossa nova. He also developed an interest in Argentinian and Latin American literature that persists today. Music and literature are intertwined for him, so when he writes a melody, he imagines words or dialogue, and texts often suggest melodies to him. Faina has been resident in Europe since 2002 with Holland, his home, being where he became exposed and affected by contemporary classical music. This is reflected in the compositions on "Different Roots" performed by the Change Ensemble. This ensemble is comprised of twenty-three musicians that include some of the most prominent jazz soloists of the Dutch contemporary music scene. Inspiration for each piece was found in selected small fragments and short stories from three different books, "The Aleph," from Jorge Luis Borges, and Julio Cortazar's "Cronopios Famas" and "Save Twilight."

This recording is as much a contemporary orchestral recording with voice and concert instruments integrated into a concert jazz band ensemble. It is fascinating as Faina develops melodic themes with a rich display of color and lines, creating an intricate and evocative texture against which solos can be heard. This setting itself may capture a listener on its own such as the haunting beauty of "Deep, Dark and Blues." This composition is presented in two takes and which includes Folkert Oosterbeek's classical tinged piano improvisation. This improvisation begins solo before the richly layered brass, reeds, and voice add their atmosphere. Fanny Alofs voice adds a distinctive quality to some ensemble passages. She provides a recitation to capture the spirit of Julio Cortazar's "Speech of The Bear" for the moody "At Night," on which Gerald Kleijn plays a hauntingly gorgeous Flugelhorn solo. "A Room Full of People" provides a more tempestuous ambiance with a rock-laden groove and Guillermo Celano's jazz-rock guitar shredding." An Installment of Time" contrasts with its gradual and intricate melodic development with Alofs

reciting Cortazar's "Instructions on How to Wind a Watch." The final original from this session is "If I'm To Live," with its enchanting, almost hypnotic blend of brass and woodwinds, with Alofs' voice gently rising above the ensemble.

A bonus track, "Dreams," was recorded by the Metro-pole Orkest and displayed some of the compositional techniques found elsewhere, with timbre and color taking on a new dimension on this piece. At some moments, "Dreams" sounds like music from a movie soundtrack. It concludes a recording that may be difficult to pigeonhole but very rewarding to an attentive listener. **Ron Weinstock**



GERALD MCCLENDON
Let's Have a Party
 DELTA ROOTS

In a review of his debut album "Can't Nobody Stop Me Now," I wrote about Delbert McClendon, "Whatever the song or mood, McClendon's command and conviction stands out, along with the first-rate backing provided." Like that earlier recording, drummer-songwriter-producer Twist Turner has produced this latest album of "old school" Soul, Blues, and R&B. Turner also wrote all twelve songs and is playing drums.

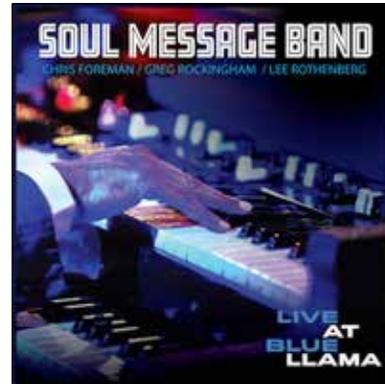
This album was recorded at Delta Roots Sound Studios in Chicago employing the talents of guitar men Melvin Taylor, Rico McFarland, Rusty Zinn, and Joe Burba, keyboardists Tony Llorens, Sumito Ariyoshi, Brian James, and Jim Pugh and using The Delta Roots Horns, including John "Boom" Brumbach and Skinny Williams.

Listening to this recording, one hears echoes of Sam Cooke, Tyrone Davis, and Gene Chandler mixed in with performances that evoke Albert King and Bobby Bland. Turner has contributed choice originals in a classic soul-blues vein, and the afore-mentioned studio band provides exquisite backing. Among the top tracks is "Keep On Keeping On," with McClendon singing encouragement and taking the bitter with the sweet. Skinny Williams' sax break accents the vocal. The mood and message of this song is echoed on "You Got To Be Strong." Rico McFarland's stellar, stinging guitar adds bite to McClendon's singing about being laid off and being on the welfare line on "If It Ain't The Blues." Two other tracks sport McFarland's guitar, including "Throw This Dog a Bone."

Built upon Johnny B. Gayden's funky bass line,

the good times are celebrated on the title track with Skinny Williams' raspy saxophone backing and solo. A ballad, "Pretty Girl," brings back the classic Chicago soul of the Impressions and the Dells. Skinny Williams takes a booting solo on this as well. "Ghetto Child" has a narrative of a street-wise hustler with Burba's heated guitar break. The reflective "Start All Over Again" has a southern country-soul flavor that might suggest Arthur Alexander to some listeners.

Once again, Gerald McClendon is heard on another album of first-rate idiomatic soul and blues performances. He reinforces his reputation as a keeper of the 'old school' soul flame on this recording. **Ron Weinstock**



SOUL MESSAGE BAND
Live at the Blue Llama
 LIVE AT BLUE LLAMA RECORDS

The Blue Llama Jazz Club, located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, launched a new record label, Live at Blue Llama Records. The label will feature live recordings from past performances at the club and studio releases from artists who are frequent performers. The initial release is from the superb Chicago jazz organ trio, Soul Message Band. Soul Message Band consists of Hammond B3 organist Chris Foreman, drummer Greg Rockingham, and guitarist Lee Rothenberg. This recording is the group's first live album and features a program in the vein of Jimmy Smith and Richard 'Groove' Holmes.

Foreman and Rockingham have been playing together for a substantial period. With guitarist Bobby Bloom, they constituted the Deep Blue Organ Trio. The two and guitarist Henry Johnson backed the late saxophonist Red Holloway on a 2009 Delmark album. For Delmark, the Soul Message Band, including alto saxophonist Greg Ward, produced the spectacular 2019 recording, "Soulful Days." While Ward is absent on this road recording, this trio is more than capable of making cooking organ jazz.

It is a pretty straightforward set of music opening with Grant Green's "Matador." Foreman opens it with some greasy, bluesy notes before the trio kicks things up a notch and plays tribute to Green in their heated performance with Rothenberg laying down the melody, then a scintillating solo with Foreman laying down his backing while Rockingham swings hard. After the sterling guitar solo, Foreman takes things further, display-