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Wadada Leo Smith / Jack Dejohnette  
*America*  
(Tzadik)



collaboration by two veteran players was pitched to ECM records in 1976 but turned down, so thanks to Tzadik for finally recording it and letting it out of the gate.

*America* bears at least some resemblance to another trumpet and drums record — Don Cherry and Ed Blackwell's "El Corazon" — especially on the opening title track. But where Cherry kept switching instruments, here Smith sticks to trumpet (and the mellower flugelhorn on the final piece). The relatively open space of the duo lets one focus in on both players' sounds intimately to catch all the shades of timbre and tone, and it's beautifully recorded.

The main criticism of a musical duo is often

This

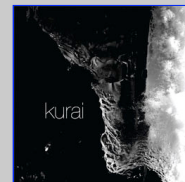
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**Daniel Meyer**

that the limited palette might make for a monotonous set, but such is not the case here, as the subtle changes in Smith's sound — all clear and ringing here, then smeared or cracked there — and Dejohnette's constant rhythmic change-ups-continue to keep things interesting. The level of playing is very high indeed: the piece entitled "Ed Blackwell, The Blue Mountain Sun Drummer" comes closest to consciously conjuring up the aforementioned "El Corazon", sounding very much like a Cherry composition, with Smith's more open regular sized horn being the main tell-tale sign that it is indeed something else. The relatively brief "John Brown's Fort" is a ballad of sorts, with trumpet floating over busy but quiet drumming, and the title piece begins the whole record with a fanfare and extemporization that lets us know these two mean business.

- Jeph Jerman 2009-07-15



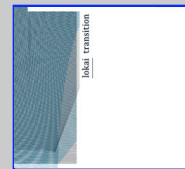
**Wadada Leo Smith / Jack Dejohnette:**  
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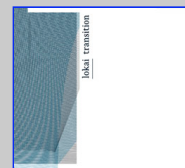
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