

Featured Artist: Wadada Leo Smith's Golden Quartet

CD Title: Tabligh

Year: 2008

Record Label: Cuneiform Records

Style: Free Jazz / Avante Garde

Musicians: Wadada Leo Smith (trumpet), Vijay Iyer (piano, Fender Rhodes & synthesizer), John Lindberg (bass), Shannon Jackson (drums)



Review:

This 2008 release led by progressive jazz trumpeter and early member of Chicago's cutting-edge AACM consortium, Wadada Leo Smith will certainly reside near the zenith of his voluminous discography as a leader and session artist. On this effort, he leans a bit towards an avant-garde/jazz-fusion element, largely due to pianist Vijay Iyer's use of synthesizer and Fender Rhodes. However, Smith's work with avant, jazz-rock guitarist Henry Kaiser for the *Yo Miles* recordings, swayed further into the jazz-fusion element amid the electric Miles based stylizations.

The recording itself is enamored by a crystalline sound presentation, as the band was captured during a performance for the CalArts Creative Music Festival in 2005. And with these four extended Smith compositions, the quartet surges forward with the impetus of heavyweight boxers pursuing a rigorous training regimen. But it's by no means a rehearsal session. In effect, Smith leads the charge via his bold, golden toned lines as the quartet communicates a flexible, powerful and fluid mode of attack throughout.

The respective musicians intimate an alignment of progressive-jazz and improvising all-stars. While drumming hero Shannon Jackson often thrusts the band's momentum into the red zone via his explosive fills and punchy crash-and-burn like accents. Otherwise, Iyer's darkly textured synth swashes add an ethereal element to quieter moments, where the musicians engage in temperate musings or subtle cat n' mouse type dialogues.

On the piece titled "Caravan of Winter," the quartet embarks upon curvy routes amid highs and lows as Iyer, Jackson and bassist John Lindberg generate a sense of the apocalypse. And then Smith's muted lines are counterbalanced by Iyer's spacey EFX backdrops during the final and lengthiest piece on the album "Tabligh." Although they gradually elevates matters into the stratosphere, sparked by the trumpeter's torrid phrasings atop the rhythm section's clash-of-the-titans manner of accelerating the overall dynamic. Simply stated, it's a tour-de-force program, complete with a distinct sense of adventure. (Feverishly recommended...)

Tracks: Rosa Parks, DeJohnette, Caravan of Winter, Tabligh

Record Label Website: <http://www.cuneiformrecords.com>

Reviewed by: Glenn Astarita

