

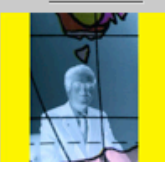
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Leader-trumpeter Smith with Vijay Iyer (Fender Rhodes and synthesizer) John Lindberg, (bass), and Shannon Jackson (drums), are known as the Golden Quartet and they shine just like the stuff they're named after in this live recording.

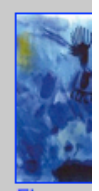
From a respectful tribute to the daring Rosa Parks that opens the disc, through a nod to "Dejohnette," a beautiful lament called "Caravan of Winter" and ending with the full-blown, and longest piece, *Tabligh*, this music touches both body and soul. It is fuelled by Smith's quick, powerful bursts of sound as he at times blows like the wall of Jericho would never come down, and at others, with a comforting strain of poetry or a keening complaint. The range of emotional color as well as the highly original formal ideas are fascinating features of Smith as a player and composer and form the core appeal of the this release.

Smith has equally idiosyncratic and imaginative input from his rhythm partners, however. Lindberg's bass sound is the underpinning, as he takes bold risks in pursuit of the sound that works to keep the pieces cooking. Also a composer who's worked with Braxton, Hugh Ragin and other creative musicians, Lindberg has learned his craft well and is in top shape here. Pianist Vijay Iyer is no slouch in the creative playing department, either, and he is fearless in his harmonic explorations: no timidity or tentativeness here — just bold strokes where needed, which is not to say he can't be restrained and evocatively nuanced, which he is, especially clearly in "Caravan of Winter." If Smith is the mastermind behind the operation, Shannon Jackson drives the getaway car, as his rhythmic drive pushes everyone to the limits of their powers. This veteran of the creative music scene who has played with Ornette Coleman, Anthony Braxton and Cecil Taylor stokes the vision which is shaped by the creative charts of the leader and the gems uncovered in the improvisations, which are both stirring and serene.

- Paul Serralheiro 2008-07-30



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