

jazz translations of Björk's music. "E.S.P." is the only jazz standard on the record and the trio keeps the spirit of the piece intact as they dissect the musical matter of the song. "Nuage" begins with some impressionistic Debussy-influenced piano work. This is Weber's first compositional contribution to the album and it is truly stunning. Ravitz and Denson have an empathetic rapport and help to give the piece, what seems like, an effortless groove. Ravitz provides some of the most sensitive cymbal work, on this track and many others, which you are likely to ever hear. "Hojas Marchitas" begins with the relaxing sound of a kalimba, well played by Weber, and the band does a nice job moving into the core of the piece without upsetting the mood established by the introduction. The kalimba resurfaces underneath a drum solo, with focus on toms and cymbals, from Ravitz. An odd dripping noise, which might have something to do with the fact that "rum bottle" and "loops" are two instruments credited to Weber in the liner notes, finds its way throughout "Child's Play." This is probably the simplest tune, in conception and performance, on the album and the band revels in the opportunity to lay down some solid grooves. Ravitz's "If I Only Had An Answer" is one of the more enigmatic, and introspective, performances on this album and features some terrific soloing from Denson. A title like "Lunatic," which is the album closer, might lead you to expect a free-jazz firestorm of notes. However, Weber, Denson and Ravitz deliver a piece that, while slightly schizophrenic in directional changes, moves from sultry, to South America, to swing, and remains sensational from beginning to end. Minsarah is truly a musical marvel!



Grassella Oliphant

THE GRASS ROOTS/THE GRASS IS GREENER - Collectables Records Corp. PO Box 35, Narberth PA 19072. www.oldies.com

One for the Masses; The Descendant; Star Dust; Uptown Hours; Mrs. O; Haitian Lady; Shiny Stockings; Grandfather's Waltz; Step Lightly; Mood Indigo; Get Out of My Life Woman; Ain't That Peculiar; Soul Woman; Peaches Are Better Down the Road; The Yodel; Cantaloupe Woman; The Latter Days; Rapid Shave.

PERSONNEL: Grassella Oliphant, drums; Harold Ousley, tenor sax; Bobby Hutcherson, vibes; Ray McKinney, Major Holley, bass; Grant Green, guitar; John Patton, organ; Clark Terry, trumpet, flugelhorn, pocket trumpet.

By Dave Miele

I'll admit that before I received this CD, a double release from Collectables Records containing re-issues of *The Grass Roots* and *The Grass Is Greener*,

I had not heard of drummer Grassella Oliphant. A lesser known drummer on the post-bop jazz scene of the sixties, Oliphant released these albums in 1965 and 67. They have two vastly different vibes, despite sharing many of the same musicians. Both are entertaining and contain some excellent playing, from Oliphant as well as a host of famous sidemen including Grant Green and Clark Terry, among others. While there are no extended solos or from Oliphant on either album (which—I have to admit—I found puzzling), the drummer keeps a mean beat. He has a relaxed and easy time keeping style, which is somehow simultaneously driving and propulsive. Oliphant tends to push the beat—almost to rush—in a manner reminiscent of such masters as Max Roach and Jimmy Cobb. He leads a band from the drum throne confidently and musically.

The Grass Roots, my favorite of the two, is a hard-hitting post-bop quartet recording, which unfolds as a feature for saxophonist Harold Ousley, who writes several of the tunes and solos extensively. The one and only Bobby Hutcherson is on vibes as the sole harmonic component of the quartet. Ray McKinney plays bass. The band handles five Ousley originals. The tenorist has a unique and interesting compositional style that relies heavily on syncopated lines, vamps and rhythmic hits—a wonderful writer for a drummer-led project. Hits which appear first as elements of the main melody frequently return as background parts underneath the soloist on such medium to slow tempo tunes as "One for the Money" and "Uptown Hours" as well as on the burning swing of "Mrs. O" and "The Descendant." Ousley and Hutcherson handle the soloing chores—wonderful statements abound from both. McKinney and Oliphant provide an intense rhythm section. The band also deals well with ballads; "Star Dust" and Joe Henderson's "Step Lightly" are included. Finally, they invent interesting arrangements standards such as "Mood Indigo," which is taken at an unusually bright tempo.

The second re-issue contained on this 2-on-1 CD is *The Grass Is Greener*. This is a larger group and contains such masters as Grant Green on guitar and Clark Terry on trumpet. The feel of this CD is soul and funk influenced. Nearly all tunes are in a blues form. Included are originals from band members such as Terry ("Peaches are Better Down the Road") and Ousley ("The Latter Days"), as well as two co-authored by Green and organist John Patton ("Soul Woman" and "The Yodel"). Feels run the gamut from slow to bright swing, and shuffles to more soul-influenced, backbeat styles. Oliphant plays in these feels as comfortably as he does in the more traditional swing feels of the other album. This band is the perfect fit for the vibe of the CD.


Coming into these two CDs completely fresh, as I stated earlier, I had an open mind and was ready to give Grassella Oliphant the chance to capture my ears. This he certainly did. Oliphant is an excellent time-keeper and a competent and interesting band leader. While the two re-issues contained on this disc are in contrasting styles, Oliphant's personal musical identity comes through equally on both. The soloists and composers involved all do their jobs particularly well. I wouldn't be surprised if you hadn't heard of drummer Grassella Oliphant. I would be surprised if,

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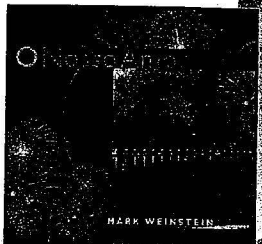
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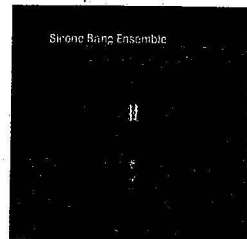
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Sirone Bang Ensemble

CONFIGURATION - Silkheart Records, 2006. www.silkheart.se

Jupiter's Future; Freedom Flexibility; We Are Not Alone, But We Are Few; I Remember Albert; Notre Dame De La Garde; Configuration.

PERSONNEL: Billy Bang, violin; Charles Gayle, alto & tenor saxophones; Sirone, bass; Tyshawn Sorey, drums.

By Margot Elizabeth Meyers

Innovation, artistry, talent and skill - past, present and future is represented in full abundance by way of the Sirone Bang Ensemble and its individual components: Billy Bang, Charles Gayle, Sirone and Tyshawn Sorey - a very timely and likely combination of creative masterminds on their latest CD appropriately titled *Configuration*.

The six compositions were contributed equally by Bang and Sirone. The overall sound of this CD