

Listening In

Once in a great while a new album appears that has all the ingredients that we purists love to hear in our music: soul, wit, fire, swing, and originality. I was captured by the first cut on Kirk Lightsey's new CD—a Jimmy Heath tune called "A New Blue"—and remained so throughout the program.

Kirk is tender here, but his trio is a gestalt that is more than just piano with bass and drum accompaniment. The drumming of Famoudou Don Moye is airy, creative and smokingly punctual. And I loved bassist Tibor Elekes's sound and note placement right from his short intro on the first cut. Like Charlie Haden, he emphasizes the low end on the instrument, and when he solos, it's never like listening to rubber bands snapping. Unfortunately the liner notes offer no information on Elekes other than he comes from Europe.

"A New Blue" finds Moye on brushes in a medium tempo interplay with the piano, all underpinned by stealthy bass lines. The trio immediately establishes the fun they're about to have, and they spend the rest of the album having it. Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way" is nothing like Bill Evans' version. It slips and slides, veers and careens, almost capsizes occasionally, and safely makes it to port with all hands on board. "From Chopin to Chopin," arranged by Elekes, is an unexpectedly successful melding of European and African influences.

And, as if that weren't an unlikely enough event, just check out the next offering—a medley of "Freedom Jazz Dance" (Eddie Harris), "Pinocchio" (Wayne Shorter), "Temptation" (Freed-Brown)!, and "Giant Steps" (John Coltrane). Lightsey takes Eddie's tonal conundrum at a speed that'll have all of us pianists practicing that line for days. The improbably constructed med-

ley works, partially because of its own outlandishness but mainly because these musicians are consummate, and they keep a thread of cohesion through even the most abrupt changes in sonic scenery.

"Four in One" is a Monk tune, played superbly by all. The changes are standard, but the melody is extremely difficult. Lightsey's "Habiba" is based on a vamping bass figure with lots of fascinating polyrhythms from the drums and a heated piano solo that builds tension and releases it. The bass solo is economical and just the perfect length. The final cut and title tune, "Goodbye Mr. Evans" by altoist Phil Woods, receives a gentler treatment, paying homage to the great pianist without emulating him.

Although the CD title implies a dedication to Bill Evans, I didn't feel much of him in any of the music (except the final cut). Could this have been a marketing decision? Perhaps this beautiful album should have been

ed Hello, Mr. Lightsey
—Jessica Williams