

KIRK LIGHTSEY TRIO***Goodbye Mr. Evans (Evidence)*** 7780

With the jazz world currently awash with brilliant piano players, we all too often see major labels stumbling all over themselves to sign and record the newest young phenom. As a result, far too many mature and more established players remain under-recorded. Case in point is Kirk Lightsey. As a mainstay of the Eighties supergroup, the Leaders, and a veteran of countless bands led by the likes of Dexter Gordon and Dave Murray to name but two, Lightsey proved long ago that he was a world-class musician who could run with the big boys. At 60, he's not yet an elder statesman like his Detroit homies Hank Jones, Tommy Flannagen, and Barry Harris, but he certainly shares their propensity for melodic eloquence and exquisite taste. Right from the git-go, on Jimmy Heath's laid-back opener, "A New Blue," there's a certain palatable complexity and relaxed maturity about Lightsey's playing that really hits home. There's no paucity of zestful rhythmic fireworks either as bassist Tibor Elekes and Leaders' drummer Famoudou Don Moye stretch out with the pianist on a spirited medley of "Freedom Jazz Dance/Pinocchio/Temptation/Giant Steps." "Habiba" is the only Lightsey original, a mid-tempo exercise in sterling interplay that simmers to a near boil. The title track, Phil Woods' near classic, is a contemplative tribute to Bill Evans, which Lightsey uses to close the set while thoughtfully expanding his visions across the aural canvas he has so masterfully created here.

★★★★ 1/2

- Jay Trachtenberg