

Bob's Wilder

Bob Rockwell 5 Plays The Music Of Alec Wilder

Saxophonist Bob Rockwell is wild about Wilder. Recently he decided to retrieve this somewhat unheeded, though richly faceted American composer from oblivion. Alec Wilder created his own musical world, composed beautiful tunes - often with a surprising twist - and although his music is a well-hidden secret to a broader public, he has long enjoyed cult status, especially among American jazz musicians. "Bob's Wilder" is Danish resident Bob Rockwell's very personal interpretation of Wilder's music, featuring a dozen of Rockwell's original arrangements for his quintet.

It is obvious that Rockwell found the material fascinating. Wilder's songs aren't easy; as Bob says, 'they're tricky'. This is not apparent to the ordinary listener. We perceive the music as natural, logical – just a great tune that keeps hanging in the room long after the speakers are silent. But Wilder's songs aren't ear-hangers in the trite sense; the tunes unfold, crawl under your skin and create an atmosphere. They conjure up a bittersweet pensiveness – not pain, nor sadness, but a warm, moody feeling. Some may call this music exclusive, but that isn't the right phrase; it implies that it aims at a small audience. Bob Rockwell's cd isn't difficult to understand, to the contrary. The music touches the listener with its special lyrical and slightly melancholy feeling. Like the sound track to a *film noir*, this music suits many moods, soft and subtle, warm and intense. A superb studio recording by The Danish Broadcast Company is a fine vehicle for this timeless music – music that will never go out of fashion, for it has never been fashionable.

Bob Rockwell's arrangements, and the incredibly tight and solid Danish/Swedish band hit the mood and intensity of the music from start to finish. The Swedish trumpeter and flugelhornist, Mårten Lundgren's nimble and delicate tone is a great asset, as is the obvious talent of pianist Kasper Villaume. With fine perception and feeling, the rhythm section, bassist Marc Davis and drummer Morten Lund, have taken the best from jazz of the 50's – they have the courage to keep it simple and be a team whose main function is to swing, groove and create a solid base for the horns. It is easy to hear that this is a steady line-up, a genuine band.

Bob Rockwell has long since proven himself a great and dedicated musician. For many years, he has been a 'Dane', fronting his own groups and working as a sideman in innumerable constellations (The Organizers, The Danish Radio Jazz Orchestra, Jan Kaspersen, Jesper Lundgaard, The Repertory Quartet, and the American vocalist and pianist Ben Sidran), recorded in his own name for SteepleChase, and been a popular soloist abroad. He has never sounded better than right now – he expresses himself with composure, maturity and authority, his sound is large, rich and vibrant, and he seems intent on playing only what is absolutely necessary. He is one with his material, and his playing is satiated with love of jazz. And that is why "Bob's Wilder" is among the very best Bob Rockwell recordings.

"These days we are bombarded with wall-paper music, and it's important to know this kind of stuff and hold on to it. If you can't hear how exceptional these songs are, you don't have ears", says Bob Rockwell.

Bob Rockwell, tenor saxophone; Mårten Lundgren, trumpet & flugelhorn; Kasper Villaume, piano; Marc Davis, bass; Karsten Bagge, drums.

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