

**Doug Talley Quartet**  
**KANSAS CITY SUITE**  
**Serpentine CD-050103**

*Personnel: Doug Talley, tenor & soprano saxophones; Wayne Hawkins, piano; Tim Brewer, bass; Keith Kavanaugh, drums*

*Tracks: 1600 E. 18th Street; City of Fountains; The Sleeping Child; The Buck Stops Here; Stockyard Blues (KC Strip); Basie and the Prez; Sky Stations; Plaza Lights (Plaza Nights); Shuttlecocks (Badminton, Anyone?); Pendergast*

*Recorded live, May 2001, at Valley View United Methodist Church, Overland Park, Kansas; Sam Platt (Red House Recording, Eudora, KS), engineer.*

Kansas City Suite is a solid set of ten originals by Doug Talley, each stand-alone entities, which speaks volumes about his compositional prowess as well as his affection for Kansas City.

Accompanied by the entourage of Wayne Hawkins on piano, Tim Brewer at bass and Keith Kavanaugh doubling as drummer and graphic artist for the liner notes, Talley takes you through a collage of jazz selections dedicated to the sights and sounds that make Kansas City what it is (and was).

The opening "movement" (1600 E. 18th Street -- named for the address of the Blue Room at 18th & Vine) is a Charlie Parker-inspired tune that follows the form of late '40s-early '50s bebop without sounding dated.

Next up is "City of Fountains," which puts me in mind of the late '60s compositions of Wayne Shorter (though Talley credits early '70s ECM stylings as the inspiration). You've barely spent a quarter hour with this recording and you've already spanned an incredible range of traditions.

Then comes a ballad dedicated to a Plaza statue of a sleeping child, which is followed by a tribute to Harry Truman (and the late '60s Miles quintet, if my ears don't betray me).

A peculiar 5/4 blues is next and is dedicated to the once aromatic but now defunct stockyards that earned our city its name as a cowtown; although, I believe it's been a day or two since live cattle were brought to downtown KC for anything other than the American Royal.

The sixth movement, a rhythm changes tribute to Count Basie and Lester Young, is melodically and harmonically rooted in the 1930s genre to which it tips its hat, even though you can feel Talley's pull towards the bebop era which would follow. And there's Wayne Hawkins' love of the stride piano style which preceded both.

"Sky Stations," the seventh part of the suite, is a free jazz piece, but with an opening melody that conjures images of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. In the best traditions of free jazz, it comes off as pushing the envelope of tonality and meter rather than abandoning them. And instead of sounding like a group of guys who have never played together before (or have even seen the same clef), it presents musicians intimately familiar with one another and with great sensitivity towards what the others are doing.

A picaresque Latin piece reminiscent of Chick Corea's "Spain" follows (I'd never thought about the clay tiles on the roof of Plaza III in that way before); and wrapping things up is Talley's whimsical take on the enormous shuttlecocks which grace the Nelson-Atkins Museum lawn (a tribute to modern art), and a tune dedicated to Tom Pendergast (a tribute to modern urban politics).

Each track on Kansas City Suite is a strong composition of its own. And the fact that it is a live recording gives it an immediacy and intimacy without sacrificing sound quality.

This is an excellent CD all the way around.

-- Rod McBride  
*JAM Magazine*