

DOUG TALLEY QUARTET

***By Request* Serpentine**



By Tom Ineck

With its fourth CD on the Serpentine label, the Doug Talley Quartet continues to expand its repertoire and its tonal palette, adding horns and strings in a live recording last year at Valley View United Methodist Church in Overland Park, Kan. Applied to a set largely comprised of familiar standards, the lush arrangements are reminiscent of similar projects, including the seminal “Charlie Parker with Strings.”

Utilizing tenor sax, soprano sax and bass clarinet, Talley creates subtle shifts in mood and color. Like a jazz Picasso, he dabbles in mixed media and paints in broad swashes of sound from the accompanying ensemble of brass, reeds and classical strings. But it is the core quartet of longtime colleagues that make it all work so well—Talley on reeds, Wayne Hawkins on keys, Tim Brewer on bass and Keith Kavanaugh on drums. All contribute arrangements, assuring that the group dynamic is always at work.

Cole Porter’s sophisticated “Get out of Town” begins with a lush backdrop of strings before Talley states the theme on soprano. Hawkins, Brewer and Kavanaugh all get a chance to express themselves before the tune comes to a close. Talley switches to tenor sax for an interesting take on “Take Five,” which is also a showcase for Hawkins. The lilting Bill Evans ballad “Very Early” gets a gorgeous lush treatment, as does Coltrane’s “Giant Steps,” with Talley again on soprano.

“Donna Lean” is, of course, a variation on Parker’s bop classic “Donna Lee.” The quartet draws on the Richard Rodgers songbook for “I Didn’t Know What Time It Was,” and Ellington is well represented by loving renditions of “In a Sentimental Mood” and a closing romp on “Caravan.”

The Talley quartet—augmented by trumpeter Al Pearson and alto saxophonist Gerald Dunn and backed by Shannon Finney on flute and piccolo, Elena Lence Talley on clarinet, Marvin Gruenbaum, Robin Prinzing and Brad Athey on violins, Monty Carter on viola and Les Mengel on cello—has taken another leap forward in its continuing exploration of jazz and all its permutations.