

Doug Talley Quartet
TOWN TOPIC
Serpentine CD-069601

Personnel: Doug Talley, tenor & soprano saxophone, flute; Wayne Hawkins, piano; Tim Brewer, acoustic bass; Keith Kavanaugh, drums, vibraphone.

Tracks: Western Exposure, Carolyn, Town Topic, Above Time, Serpentine Waltz, Grandpeople, The Challenge, Blues for Erl King, Cherokee.

Recorded June 24-27, 29, 1996 at BCR Audio Productions, Kansas City, MO; Bill Crain, engineer.

Kansas City has provided an environment that has spawned more than its share of fine tenor saxophone players. And it would appear as though these hallowed fields are still fertile, as evidenced by the emergence of the Doug Talley Quartet.

With Talley's sax up front, and his musical leadership behind the scenes as producer and composer, this quartet produces a nice, tightly woven music made for listening.

Things get started with a Talley tune called "Western Exposure," a swing composition to warm up the bodies and the minds. Switch gears for a gentle 6/8 groove ballad on Tim Brewer's ode to his wife, "Carolyn." Up tempo again for an entertaining Latin feel to the title tune, "Town Topic." This beginning firmly establishes group's sound as one of cool restraint and solid playing from a fully integrated and intimate unit.

"Above Time" returns the band to ballad mode. Talley delivers the tune with rich smoothness only to be followed by a lovely Wayne Hawkins solo. Winding our way on, we come upon Talley's peppy "Serpentine Waltz," with a twisty little line of a melody jumping here and there. Wayne Hawkins demonstrates his writing skills with a heartfelt "Grandpeople," in honor of his grandparents. Talley changes the mix a little by picking up the soprano sax on this tune as Tim Brewer leads the way on a nice opening solo and creamy smooth transition back to the top in a short duet into Talley's solo.

"The Challenge" returns to the cool swing of Talley's tenor. And on "Blues for Erl King," Talley demonstrates his counterpoint skills (while borrowing a little from Franz Schubert) in a piece reminiscent of the Modern Jazz Quartet's forays into Bach fugues.

Finally, we close with Keith Kavanaugh's arrangement of Ray Noble's "Cherokee." This track let's Talley and Hawkins cut loose on a pair of blistering solos all pressed along by Kavanaugh. All in all, a very entertaining and engaging CD.

-- William Buchanan III

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