

around vaguely nostalgic ballads, and adds density to surging, uptempo grooves. In between, dense thickets of creaks, groans, scribbles and burlblings appear in short linking tracks of about two minutes each, enhancing the disc's episodic atmosphere.

STEPHEN RILEY

Easy to Remember (SteepleChase)



In a sax-led trio, everybody gets to stretch out. Tenor/soprano man Riley is loose and ready to jam in this set of eight standards, which bassist Neal Caine and drummer Jason Marsalis tackle with equal verve. Riley plays softly but packs a wallop, tearing up speedy bop workouts, sliding deep into the blues, and bouncing merrily in swing time. In the disc's finest moment, "Do You Know What it Means to Miss New Orleans" disintegrates gracefully in slow motion, with Riley showing wonderful grit on soprano horn.

KENNY RITTENHOUSE

The Francis Suite (Kaela)



This sextet album flies out of the gate in a hard-edged post-bop groove, burning with both power and soul. Rittenhouse's trumpet work is solid, cutting and just a little raw in the up-tempo numbers, while the slower tracks have a comfortable, gliding ambience that is also appealing. Although the initial impact fades as the

set drifts into more lightweight fare, and some of the standards feel forced, the disc's *joie de vivre* is undeniable and infectious.

DAVID ROGERS SEXTET

The World Is Not Your Home (Jumbie)



Originally recorded a decade ago, this spirited set from tenor saxophonist Rogers is just now seeing the light of day, and it's about time. Drawing heavily from the melodic and rhythmic traditions of Ghana and Cuba, Rogers and his Detroit-based crew alternate slippery, progressive jazz themes with extended jaunts through exotically folksy grooves. The whole set is fine, but "Oboe Ketua Nyom" steals the show, setting Rogers against a pair of *gyile* xylophones for an ecstatic, 11-minute celebration of life.

PAUL SCEA

Contemporary Residents (Blujazz)



Multi-instrumentalist Scea piles on the electronics in this sextet session, running saxophones and trumpet through effects boxes, augmenting melodies with wind and guitar synthesizers, and generally warping expectations. At times strongly reminiscent of later-period Miles Davis, the nine compositions on this album are rhythmically intriguing, with overlapped or hybrid meters and touches of South American rhythm, while tweaked harmonics and reptilian

basslines parry with harsh, taunting horns.

ALEX SKOLNICK TRIO

Last Day in Paradise (Magnatude)



Considering that guitarist Alex Skolnick made his name in the thrash-metal band Testament, and that his current trio is known primarily for putting jazz arrangements to hard-rock classics, this album is disarmingly subtle. Yes, there are tunes by Rush and Ozzy Osbourne in there, but seven original tunes showcase Skolnick's own moody but not overly serious musings and a generally friendly sound. Drummer Matt Zebroski provides most of the energy, his aggressive swing perfectly balanced between jazz and rock, while Skolnick rolls with a bright, warm, understated tone.

JASON STEELE ENSEMBLE

Some Wonderful Moment (ears&eyes)



Guitarist Jason Steele takes only one solo on his debut album. It's gentle, minimalist, sneaks in quietly and is gone in a flash. That says a lot about his collectivist approach, which emphasizes the organic, shifting sound of his octet as it spirals through a series of brooding, cinematic themes. Cornetist Ron Miles gets the spotlight on most tracks: He and saxophonist Josh Sclar offer introspective solos but also take things outside in some surprisingly abstract breaks. **JT**

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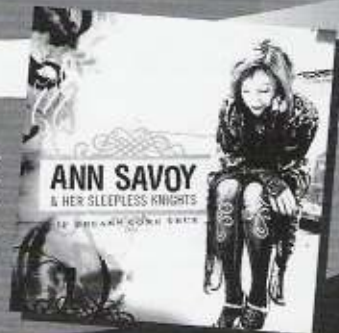
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