



RECORDINGS OF NOTE

JAZZ / Mark Miller

NIGHT DREAMERS

The Pete Magadini Quartet
Featuring Mike Allen
Timeless CD SJP 317

As the world grows smaller by the year, the historical pull of a culturally protectionist United States on musicians who would play jazz has been challenged by the practical attractions of a rather more hospitable Europe. There are record deals and careers to be had in both places — more options (at least) and real opportunities (at best) than ever before. Here, for example, we have a Montreal quintet led by a U.S.-born drummer, Pete Magadini, recording for a Dutch company. Magadini's new-found place on the respected Timeless roster should impress the folks back home in Canada who are always looking to have their judgments affirmed from abroad. Truth is, though, *Night Dreamers* needs no more recommendation than the music itself.

Inasmuch as Magadini is efficient and self-effacing, it's really saxophonist Mike Allen who jumps out boldly from *Night Dreamers*, followed a little more cautiously by pianist André White. Allen has found his style in the lyrical side of the late John Coltrane's playing, but without being bound to Trane's well-worn melodic patterns. For that, and for White's clarity and discretion, the ballads here, *Exchanging Love* and *Carolyn*, are among the

record's strongest performances. The Magadini band is completed by bassist George Mitchell and percussionist John Rudel and the program includes two tunes by Allen, one by White, one by a second Montreal pianist, Geoff Lapp, and four standards. The quintet's hard-boppish urgency is muted by the CD's airless mix, but the resulting kinder, gentler "attack" suits Allen's tenor to a T.

STRAIGHT AHEAD

The Carlo Atti Quartet
Timeless CD SJP 316

The point of interest here for the folks back home is the presence of Montreal pianist Fred Henke in an otherwise Italian quartet, again recorded for Timeless. The title says it all — in this case, straight ahead and robust bebop. Carlo Atti is an authoritative 23-year-old tenor saxophonist (a choppy Dexter Gordon sometimes) who kindly gives Henke a lot of solo room in eight of the CD's nine tunes and hands over the ninth, *Blue Room*, entirely to the pianist, bassist Luciano Milanese and drummer Massimo Dall'Omo. Atti's generosity brings him nine uniformly fine piano solos that roll along evenly in a somewhat detached but still enticing manner. As hard as it is to be excited by Henke's playing, it's harder still to stop listening. And certainly *Blue Room* is proof that he is about due for a trio date.

THE PETE MAGADINI QUINTET

NIGHT DREAMERS

A Friendly Imposition; Exchanging Love; Sunny Side; Giant Steps; Carolyn; Shutterbug; In A Sentimental Mood; Stablemates (57.24)

Mike Allen (ts/ss); Andre White (p); George Mitchell (b); Peter Magadini (d); John Rudel (pc). Montreal, Canada, March 23, 1991

(Timeless CD SJP 317)

The Pete Magadini quintet features rich, rhapsodic ballads (*Exchanging Love* and *Carolyn*) and some deftly swinging medium and up tempo cookers. The dominant solo voice belongs to saxophonist Allen, an accomplished musician who has studied Coltrane in depth and forged a style that is fresh and vital.

Giant Steps features a headlong tenor solo framed by a dense layer of rhythm from drums and percussion. The suspended introduction gives a new variation on this familiar theme. The Ellington piece has Allen on soprano and on this instrument he has a fluid, blossoming sound that emphasizes the more romantic and lyrical timbre of the straight horn. It is unusual but attractive, not least in terms of originality.

The leader is a tasteful drummer with a clean cymbal sound and an expert brush technique, the latter quite rare today. White's piano lines are supportive and flow neatly and his solos are highly complementary to Allen's distinctive style. Bassist Mitchell provides a strong, nourishing pulse.

A balanced programme and a good example of today's jazz mainstream.
Derek Ansell

The Gazette, Montreal

KEVIN DEAN

Minor Indiscretions (McGill)
PETE MAGADINI QUINTET
Night Dreamers (Timeless)

Two cheers for the home team. Montrealers Kevin Dean and Pete Magadini have made albums you should own because they're good, not because they were made here.

Magadini, a drummer, has been this way before. His 1977 *Bone's Blues* is the kind of album you put on when you need reassuring about the human capacity for hipness. *Night Dreamers* isn't as good, but then it's not trying to repeat the earlier date's success. It's its own thing, as we say.

Where *Bone's Blues* was a loose-limbed bebop date by a pickup band, *Night Dreamers* documents Magadini's working group, a '60s-modernist quintet given a distinctive flavor by the presence of John Rudel as a second percussionist.

Rudel and Magadini both leave big spaces between their notes, so they complete each other's beats rather than competing. Bassist George Mitchell and pianist André White offer similar restraint. Mitchell's woolly tone contrasting well with White's crystalline right-hand runs.

On top is Mike Allen, an uncommonly promising young saxophonist whose style is evolving so quickly it's a good idea to check up on him every several weeks. Here there's a lot of John Coltrane in the mix, but Allen's ear for the intriguing note in a chord, and the rhythmic variety of his lines, are his own.

Dean's album is at least as impressive, an elegant quintet date in the tradition of the trumpeter's great '60s influences. Lee Morgan and Kenny Dorham.

This is no by-the-numbers imitation, though. Dean, who teaches at McGill, has written a convincing set of piquant hard-bop tunes that set off his light, fleet trumpet style and his low-key sense of humor.

Like Magadini, Dean is also aided by an important saxophonist, Toronto's Mike Murley. Murley records about once a month, it seems, but this is one of his most convincing performances, gruff and concise.

H6 Saturday, November 2, 1991 THE TORONTO STAR



The Pete Magadini Quintet *Night Dreamers* (Timeless): Long-time drummer Magadini goads his four young Montreal pals through a lively collection of songs here, but the real star is Mike Allen on tenor and soprano sax, who coaxes sweet sound and interesting solo lines from such numbers as "Giant Steps" and "Stablemates" while performing exquisitely on his own ballad "Exchanging Love".

This is often lively listening, with pianist Andre White demonstrating a sure touch, but surely added percussion is unnecessary to complement the boss's neat beat.

PETE MAGADINI QUINTET

Night Dreamers
Timeless CD SJP 317

Magadini moved to Canada from the United States in the Seventies and now works in Montreal, where this album was recently recorded. As a drummer-bandleader he seems to be able to draw strong performances from other musicians through the imagination and fire of his own playing and the musical settings he devises. His earlier album *Bone's Blues*, for example, (reviewed in *Jazz Im 5*) presented some of tenorist Don Monza's finest work on record.

On *Night Dreamers* Mike Allen, playing tenor on most tracks, sounds inspired throughout a set of generally attractive originals and superior jazz standards. His improvising is especially sensitive on his own ballad "Exchanging Love". Pianist Andre White and bassist George Mitchell provide competent support and Magadini limits his solos, making them varied and interesting. In fact, the record gets its distinctiveness partly from the excellent interplay of the drums and John Rudel's percussion. On "Giant Steps" the novelty of the interpretation depends on textures created by Rudel's conga and Magadini's brushes.

While these performances all inhabit a post-Coltrane modern-mainstream idiom there is plenty of variety of mood and tempo. The only relatively weak track is "In A Sentimental Mood", on which Allen switches to soprano and the ballad hovers coyly between mellowness and lushness, with

