

VARIOUS ARTISTS
The Complete Bee Hive Sessions

Mosaic MD12-261 (12 CDs). 2015. Jim Neumann, Susan Neumann, Fred Norsworthy, Bob Porter, orig. prods.; Michael Cuscuna, reissue prod.; Malcolm Addey, Ben Rizzi, Paul Serrano, reissue engs. AAD. TT: 12:23:56

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

SONICS ★★★★★

Founded in 1977 by the avid jazz record collector Jim Neumann and his wife, Susan, Bee Hive Records concentrated on under-recognized hard-bop musicians at a time when bebop had fallen from favor. Now Mosaic Records has released a limited-edition boxed set containing all 16 albums issued by Bee Hive before it folded in 1984, featuring such accomplished second-tier boppers as baritone saxophonist Nick Brignola, tenor saxophonist Sal Nistico, trumpeter Dizzy Reese, guitarist Sal Salvador, and pianist Ronnie Mathews, plus such non-boppers as singer Johnny Hartman and tenor saxophonist Arnett Cobb. Besides the bandleaders, these sessions are notable for their strong rhythm sections, which include bassists Walter Booker, George Duvivier, Dave Holland, and Sam Jones, and drummers Vernel Fournier, Panama Francis, Roy Haynes, and Joe Morello. Solid if unspectacular, the music is consistently rewarding.

Nick Brignola is joined by three other baritone players on his two albums—Pepper Adams on *Baritone Madness*, and Ronnie Cuber and Cecil Payne on *Burn Brigade*. It's often hard to tell which is playing, though Brignola has a darker tone than Adams or Payne. Charlie Parker wrote half the tunes on *Baritone Madness* but none on *Burn Brigade*, yet both albums are steeped in bebop, exemplified most virtuosically by Brignola and Adams's breakneck rendition of Parker's "Donna Lee." Brignola also appears on Sal Nistico's album *Neo Nistico*, where the two solo cogently over Roy Haynes's blistering beat on the Charlie

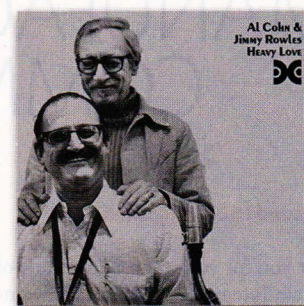
Parker–Dizzy Gillespie bop standard "Anthropology." Nistico in turn appears on Curtis Fuller's *Fire and Filigree*, complementing the trombonist in a sprightly post-bop vein.

The Jamaican-born Dizzy Reese plays crackling bebop on his *Manhattan Project*, which features tenor saxophonists Clifford Jordan and Charles Davis; the three venture slightly beyond bop in the smoking "One for Trane." Jordan was a Chicago native (as is Neumann), and his album *Hyde Park after Dark* boasts an all-Chicago cast, including tenor saxophonist Von Freeman, whose quirky approach contrasts nicely with Jordan's straight-ahead style. Ironically, on Jordan's tastily cooking *Dr. Chicago*, the sidemen, among them trumpeter Red Rodney and pianist Jaki Byard, are not from the Windy City.

On his acclaimed album *Once in Every Life*, the baritone balladeer Johnny Hartman gives warmly romantic treatments to such standards as "For All We Know" and "Moonlight in Vermont." On his two albums, *Starfishers* and *Juicy Lucy* (each with different personnel), Sal Salvador picks bebop, blues, and ballads with sleek aplomb, most tellingly in his richly chorded, unaccompanied portion of "Darn That Dream." Ronnie Mathews expands into modal-jazz territory on his two albums, *Roots, Branches & Dances* and *Legacy*, joined on tenor saxophone by Frank Foster on the first, and by Ricky Ford on the second.

Pianist Roland Hanna is credited as leader on the spiritedly bopping *The New York Jazz Quartet in Chicago*, which also features saxophonist Frank Wess, bassist George Mraz, and drummer Ben Riley. Pianist Dick Katz, known mainly as an accompanist, leads a quintet including Wess, and then a trio on his *In High Profile*, displaying his keyboard prowess in the Gershwin brothers' "But Not for Me," and his arranging talent in Oscar Pettiford's "Laverne Walk." Pianist Junior Mance's *Truckin' and Trakin'* takes a bluesy direction with help from former Ray Charles tenor saxophonist David "Fathead" Newman. With Mance on piano, Arnett Cobb recorded the final Bee Hive album, *Keep On Pushin'*, displaying his breathy ballad mastery in a session that swings but doesn't bop. As such, it stands out, avoiding the air of sameness that tinges much of the label's output.

—Larry Birnbaum



AL COHN & JIMMY ROWLES
Heavy Love

Al Cohn, tenor saxophone; Jimmy Rowles, piano. Xanadu Master Edition/Elemental 906073 (CD). 1977/2015. Don Schlitten, prod.; Richard Alderson, eng.; Zev Feldman, reissue prod. ADD. TT: 48:24

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

SONICS ★★★★★

The Xanadu Master Edition series revives albums produced in the 1970s and '80s by the late founder of Xanadu Records, Don Schlitten, that had languished out of print for years. Some masters and all original artwork were lost in Hurricane Sandy, but Elemental has restored everything it could, and the haul is substantial.

Heavy Love, a duo set by Al Cohn and Jimmy Rowles from 1977, is among the handful of inaugural reissues. Cohn's Xanadu stint was significant: two dates co-led with Dexter Gordon, two quartet sessions with bebop piano sage Barry Harris, plus the new twofer *Night Flight to Dakar/Jazz in Africa*, documenting a 1980 tour with fellow tenorman Billy Mitchell. *Heavy Love* stands apart, however: two especially deep song interpreters saunter through such non-obvious picks as "Them There Eyes" and "Taking a Chance on Love."

As David Himmelstein wrote, in his hipsterish and overdone original liner note, Cohn came "out of Lesterville." The brilliant Rowles, meanwhile, does much to justify Schlitten's description of him as "the world's greatest accompanist." He typically solos second, though his rubato introductions to "These Foolish Things" and "I Hadn't Anyone Till You" put him firmly in the foreground. Balance is a problem, and most apparent when they're trading fours: Cohn's expressive peaks are a bit too hot in the mix, and Rowles's sound isn't equally present. Still, *Heavy Love* is a riveting portrait of two masters. Deeper historical background on both in the CD booklet would have been welcome.—David R. Adler