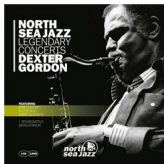


Dexter Gordon - North Sea Jazz Legendary Concerts (2013)

Written by bluesever

Friday, 31 January 2014 17:10 -

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01. It's You or No One 12:29 02. More Than You Know 20:51 03. Backstairs 23:19 Dexter Gordon - Tenor Sax Kirk Lightsey - Piano Rufus Reid - Bass Eddie Gladden - Drums Tenor Battle (Bonustrack) - !!!

04. Flying Home 11:03

Hank Jones - Piano Gene Ramey - Bass Gus Johnson - Drums Dexter Gordon, Budd Johnson, Illinois Jackuet, Arnett Cobb, Buddy Tate - Saxes Recorded in Carrousel Zaal, The Hague, Netherlands, 1979

The North Sea Jazz festival has an immense archive of filmed concert performances, which makes its Legendary Concerts CD/DVD series an eye-wateringly interesting prospect. The first eight volumes—featuring tenor saxophonists Dexter Gordon, Yuri Honing and Wayne Shorter, pianist Michael Borstlap, guitarist Jan Akkerman, and trumpeters Miles Davis, Eric Vloeimans and Dizzy Gillespie—are all cherry-pickingly good, and more releases are planned. Already, Legendary Concerts is a major event.

Recorded and filmed at The Hague's Carrousel Zaal during the 1979 festival, Dexter Gordon's performance was among the first he gave in Europe after relocating back to the US following fifteen years based in Paris and Copenhagen. Fronting a take-no-prisoners American quartet, Gordon is on rousing form, tearing through passionate, rough-edged solos on "It's You Or No One" and "Backstairs" (two tunes, the second a Gordon original, from his 1977 US comeback album, Homecoming, on Columbia) and getting gently rapturous between times on "More Than You Know." The two high-temperature tracks are so intensely dynamic they are practically trance inducing. Gordon is accompanied with verve by Eddie Gladden on drums, Rufus Reid on bass and Kirk Lightsey on piano. Sound quality is excellent, of recording-studio quality. The DVD is a delight, too; functionally but well filmed, getting in close on the musicians' faces and drawing the viewer in.

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The closing track, billed as a Tenor Battle, is taken from a separate performance later the same evening. Gordon is joined by four other tenor saxophonists—Budd Johnson, Illinois Jacquet, Arnett Cobb and Buddy Tate—for a romp through "Flying Home," made into a hit for the Lionel Hampton band in 1942 by Jacquet's honking and screaming solo. Johnson takes the first solo, Gordon the second and Jacquet the third. There is not much "battling" going on, although Gordon briefly quotes from Jacquet's classic solo before Jacquet plays all of it. At less than ten minutes playing time, a country mile from outstaying its welcome, it is a shame that Cobb and Tate were not also given the chance to solo.

By the end of "Flying Home," practically the entire audience is on its feet, cheering the band on, just as audiences did for Hampton back in the day. The entire audience, that is, except for a solitary Mr Grumpy fleetingly caught by the camera slumped morosely in his seat. It is a déjà vu moment, for when Hampton played in London sometime in the late 1950s/early 1960s, British saxophonist Johnny Dankworth (as he was then known) greeted "Flying Home" with the heckle "Play some jazz!" You want barely relevant trivia, you got it. ---Chris May, allaboutjazz.com

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