Elvin Jones And Richard Davis – Heavy Sounds (1967)



A1 Raunchy Rita 11:34 A2 Shiny Stockings 5:10 A3 M. E. 2:39 B1 Summertime 11:33 B2 Elvin's Guitar Blues 3:27 B3 Here's That Rainy Day 7:00 Bass – Richard Davis Drums – Elvin Jones Piano – Billy Greene (tracks: A1 to A3, B2, B3) Tenor Saxophone – Frank Foster (tracks: A1 to A3, B2, B3)

This Impulse! session co-led by drummer Elvin Jones and bassist Richard Davis finds the pair joined by tenor saxophonist Frank Foster and pianist Billy Green. The quartet performs an erratic but generally interesting set of music including "Shiny Stockings," Foster's funky "Raunchy Rita," and "Elvin's Guitar Blues"; the latter briefly features Jones making his first and only appearance on guitar. The music is essentially advanced hard bop but is not all that essential. ---Scott Yanow, AllMusic Review

If ever there was an appropriate title, this would be it. Heavy is a great album but not in the out-there way I would have expected. I've listened to a few albums where drummers and bassists team up, and all of them feature quite a bit of improvisation and non-traditional music structures. Free Jazz this ain't, but it succeeds in its simplicity.

Produced in 1967, this is some of the best hard-bop bass playing I've heard since Mingus. Every track has a groove, and Davis solos in a context-appropriate way that still manages to show off a lot of his tricks and techniques. Raunchy Rita is a sultry banger that kicks off the album, and of particular note to me are Davis' perfectly timed slides and volume he maintains even when going to higher registers.

Shiny Stockings gets a bit more free, and we hear some mishmash inbetween sections of metered brushed beats by Jones. M.E. is a bit of a step back in the direction of traditional form with some good but fairly mainstream bebop.

A lot could be said of this take on Summertime. Traditionally Summertime bores the hell outta me but I gotta admit they really pulled out all the stops. Davis bows the melody for about 2:30 while Jones adds some texture with odd cymbals and mallets. I was pretty impressed with the amount of texture and control Davis showed in his bowed sections; unusual for a jazz bassist of the 60s. He even throws in some (intentional) shrieks that make me involuntarily cringe, but it is impressive that he can get that exact timbre and those overtones on command. He then breaks into some melodic pizzicato playing before giving Jones some solo time. This is more what I would have expected from an album between two rhythm-section instruments, and you can hear Jones' grunts as he strings out his 2 minute solo. It ends with more bowed work from Davis, this time getting pretty out there with use of time and timbre. It's a cringe-fest for me but I appreciate what he's doing. This is a live version:

The last track of note is Elvin's Guitar Blues, which is a duet between Davis and Jones' acoustic guitar. I've been harsh on this blog about blues before but the simplicity here actually works and more accurately captures the spirit of blues. I would have been happy if the first two minutes had just been extended into the entire track, but some sax comes in and we hear brushes and piano creep in as well. They're alright, but the use of silence between Davis and Jones struck an emotional note more effectively.

This album had been described before as plain hard-bop but that's less than half the story. We hear a ton of range from Davis and some interesting sounds from Jones, though I feel this album featured Davis most prominently. He should have gotten top-billing on the album cover with the amount of soloing we hear from him. As a bassist I'm certainly not complaining about this; Dick is one of the best and we see him get free reign to play however he wants here. If you are a bassist or enjoy post-bop bass playing, this is really worth repeated listens. I've gotten some ideas for my next session in the studio for sure. ---dblbasscleph, postboppimpoint.wordpress.com

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