Pepper Adams & Donald Byrd - Stardust (1960)



1. Stardust 2. Philson 3. Trio 4. Libeccio 5. Bitty ditty Pepper Adams – baritone saxophone Donald Byrd - trumpet Kenny Burrell - guitar Tommy Flanagan - piano Paul Chambers - bass Louis Hayes - drums

As Donald Byrd and Pepper Adams emerged from the Detroit jazz scene to national prominence in the mid-'50s, their singular instrumental voices became pronounced. As good as their overall playing is on this recording from 1960 (also released with the title Stardust), it is not as potent and defined as on previous efforts like the Savoy albums Kenny Clarke Meets the Detroit Jazzmen (aka Jazzmen Detroit) or their classic Riverside recording 10 to 4 at the Five Spot. The five selections on this CD do not all feature the total united Adams-Byrd package in terms of their signature sound or the compositions, and as such diminishes the overall quality of the project. It is like skimming the surface of what is an extraordinary band that feels like it is in a growth curve. Guitarist Kenny Burrell and bassist Paul Chambers fill large roles, but pianist Tommy Flanagan sounds like merely a sideman instead of a larger puzzle piece, and drummer "Hey" Lewis (a nom de plume for Louis Hayes) is not, at this point in his career, Clarke, Elvin Jones, or anyone comparable. "Stardust" is a ten-minute ballad feature for Byrd without Adams. The Thad Jones evergreen "Bitty Ditty" closes the set, as pretty a melody and classic a tuneful, melodic, hummable bop tune as has been invented. In the middle is a basic two-note bluesy swinger titled "Philson" and Erroll Garner's "Trio" played by this sextet led by Burrell (with Adams in too late and Byrd fairly inconsequential), while the cute calypso "Libeccio" has Adams and Burrell joining in only on the second chorus. Fine solos from the front-liners save this disc, as their formidable powers still show great promise. Two years hence, this band was a top-drawer attraction, but somehow this session doesn't gel to the extent many might have hoped it would. --- Michael G. Nastos, Rovi

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