

11/4/96
Peter Watrous

"Wanton Spirit," Kenny Barron (Verve). Joined by Charlie Haden on bass and Roy Haynes on drums, the veteran pianist turns in his loosest, most searching record in years.

"Morning Call," Bruce Barth (Enja). The young pianist immaculately arranges standards and his own material. As an improviser, he's as subtle as they come, with odd rhythms and harmonies giving his solos a distinct, quiet sound.

"In Our Lifetime," Dave Douglas (New World). Mr. Douglas, a trumpeter, looks for a way out of jazz's formal traps. The music is full of textural, instrumental and rhythmic change-ups, all setting off the leader's virtuosic improvising.

"Triology," Kenny Garrett (Warner Brothers). Abstract, stream-of-consciousness improvising, always swinging, by one of the finest of the young alto saxophonists.

"Snide Remarks," Bill Stewart (Blue Note). A mildly experimental first outing by the drummer that brings together swing, a structural intelligence and a fine sense for arranging.

"A Turtle's Dream," Abbey Lincoln (Verve). Ms. Lincoln has the sound of maturity, and she understands what she's singing about.

"Joe Cool's Blues," Wynton and Ellis Marsalis (Columbia). The septet session, by the Wynton Marsalis, the trumpeter, is exceptional for the humor and play in the arrangements; Ellis, his father and the pianist, brings his driving sense of swing to bluesy trio pieces.

"Edward Simon," Ed Simon (Kokopelli). Mr. Simon has a cool, clear touch on piano, and he uses the sounds of Latin America to take his arrangements away from the ordinary.

"Prelude and Sonata," McCoy Tyner (Milestone). Mr. Tyner is joined by Christian McBride on bass and Marvin (Smitty) Smith on drums, who help make this one of his best albums in years.

"A Cool Blue," Tim Warfield (Criss Cross). In a tenor saxophone cutting session, I'd put money on Mr. Warfield over either James Carter or Joshua Redman. But like most recordings by musicians under 40, "A Cool Blue" could lose three tracks and not suffer.