



Jack Vartoogian

Wes Anderson—His music is absolutely accessible.

JAZZ BRIEFS

Wessel Anderson: 'Warmdaddy in the Garden of Swing'

Atlantic 82657; CD and cassette.

An oft-repeated criticism of Wynton Marsalis is that his sidemen lack their own voices. Grounded more in ill will toward the controversial trumpeter and composer than in an honest listen to his band, this opinion is challenged by albums like Wessel Anderson's.

In his first effort as a leader, the Marsalis septet's longtime alto saxophonist steps out from his boss's shadow with a self-assurance that will surprise all but the few who have bothered to pay attention to his always first-rate, occasionally roof-raising, solos

with Mr. Marsalis.

Mr. Anderson isn't afraid of the word funk, of letting his quartet (he's joined by the Marsalis sidemen Eric Reed and Ben Wolfe on piano and bass, and the drummer Donald Edwards) ply the straight-ahead groove of mid-60's hard-boppers like Lee Morgan.

"The Pumpkin's Lullaby," soothing and hymnlike, is the album's most memorable melody; "Go Slow for Mo'" has Mr. Anderson's best playing, atypically cool and astringent. Mr. Reed is one of the most playful of jazz soloists; the slinky triplets he sneaks onto the end of "The Black Cat" are among those small things that make life worthwhile.

Mr. Anderson's music is absolutely accessible; at 29, he's an

embryonic Cannonball Adderley, earthy and life-giving.

TONY SCHERMAN

Rodney Kendrick: 'Dance World Dance'

Verve 314 521 937; CD and cassette.

"Cogent," the composition that opens the young pianist Rodney Kendrick's new album, "Dance World Dance," conjures the image of Thelonious Monk ambling across a savannah. Like his mentor Randy Weston, Mr. Kendrick is equally drawn to Monk's spiky harmonies and to rolling African rhythms.

Mr. Kendrick's music is in flux, unstably hovering between mainstream and avant-garde. Its components are dissonant, close piano harmonies; short, sketchy melodies that let the soloists (Mr. Kendrick, the cornetist Graham Haynes and the saxophonists Arthur Blythe and Bheki Mseleku) range freely; and a propulsive, heavy beat, often featuring two bassists and extra percussion.

"Totem" is that rare thing, contemporary jazz set to an up-tempo, gospel-style back beat; wailing over a one-chord riff, the band sounds like a bent reincarnation of a 50's rhythm-and-blues band. With the thunderous pyrotechnics of "The Last Day," Mr. Kendrick serves notice that he's as adept at virtuoso romanticism as at dry minimalism. His adventurousness makes most of today's young jazz pianists sound dutifully conventional.

T. S.