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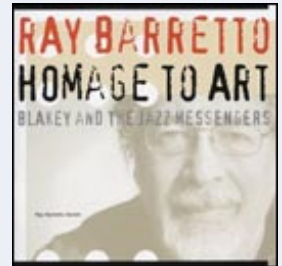
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Ray Barretto Sextet
Night Bird Music - 2003
Sunny Side Records

Posted on May 3, 2003

**Ray Barretto (Ray Barretto Sextet)
Homage to Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers**

After 50 years in the music business Ray Barretto is back where he started, playing his conga drums in a jazz format and loving every minute of it.

And why not? Critics and fans alike are praising his new release, "Homage to Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers." Some even feel that this is one of his best recordings to date.

"I finally put together some young players who have the same vision I do," says Ray, "I have two Latino players, Miguel Zenón from Puerto Rico and Luis Perdomo from Venezuela, who have no accent on their interpretation of music, and are true jazz musicians. The rest of the members are 100% jazz players, John Bailey on trumpet, Hans Grawisching on bass and Vince Cherico on drums... this band really cooks."

Playing with Blakey was one of the high points of Ray's career. Blakey, who had a special appreciation for drummers, was a fixture at many of the uptown (Harlem) jazz sessions where Ray cut his teeth as a fledgling conga player.

After hearing Ray play, Blakey invited him to sit-in, which led to 2 recordings with Blakey's large percussion ensemble: "Drums Around the Corner" and "Holiday for Skins" (Volumes 1 and 2).

45 years later Ray rummaged through his collection of Jazz Messenger recordings and came up with 8 tunes that define the band's style.

Half of the tunes selected were composed by saxophonist, Wayne Shorter. According to Ray, "The more I listened, the more I felt his music best fit, melodically and harmonically, with what we wanted to do."

In keeping with the Blakey tradition, Ray recruited his fellow band members to put their stamp on the material. Luis Perdomo added his unique sensibilities to "United," "Sleeping Dancer Sleep On" and "Noise in the Attic."

Former New World Spirit alumnus, Michael Phillip Mossman, arranged "Lester Left Town" and "Frère Jacques." John Bailey arranged the ballad, "Ballad for Buhaina," while Hans

Glawisching and Miguel Zenón arranged the funky "Buh's Bossa," ("Buh" was Blakey's nickname).

I had the pleasure of catching New World Spirit at the legendary Blue Note in New York recently. The show was a double bill and opened with former Jazz Messenger, saxophonist, Benny Golson and his Quartet.

Golson and his Quartet were smooth as silk, playing tunes such as "I Remember Clifford" and other classics. Ever the showman and storyteller, Golson shared some anecdotes about his peers, past and present (Dizzy, Clifford Brown, Charlie Parker, etc).

As for Ray Barretto and New World Spirit, they seemed to be having one hell of a good time interpreting the music of the Jazz Messengers.

On the evening I attended, saxophonist Myron Walden ably filled in for Miguel Zenón and bass player Johannes Weidenmuller substituted for Hans Glawischnig. These up and coming musicians are names to watch.

Ray sums up his philosophy: "It's not about making people get up and dance, but about having a person enjoy good music, good arrangements and excellent musicianship, while improvising and speaking the language of jazz at any given time."

Ray Barretto will be 74 by the time you read this. None the less, he is reveling in his new role as elder statesman and leader of a "pure" jazz band.

What is more, he is perfectly poised to pass on the invaluable lessons he has learned from masters like Blakey to a new generation of musicians.

Happy Birthday Ray and many more!

Thomas Peña
Co-Editor
Latin Jazz Network
04/22/03

Tracks: (click on titles to listen)

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Close Your Eyes | 5. Ballade for Buhaina |
| 2. United | 6. Frère Jacques |
| 3. Sleeping Dancer Sleep On | 7. Buh's Bossa |
| 4. Noise in the Attic | 8. Lester Left Town |



Credits:

Personnel: Ray Barretto: Congas & percussion - John Bailey: Trumpet - Miguel Zenón: Alto Sax - Luis Perdomo: Piano - Hans Glawischnig: Bass - Vince Chericco: Drums.

Compositions: track 1 by B. Petkere - tracks 2, 3, 4, 8 by Wayne Shorter - track 5 by John Bailey - track 6, Traditional - track 7 by Lee Morgan.

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