

College Music JOURNAL

7/22/96

JED LEVY QUARTET *Sleight Of Hand*

SteepleChase, c/o Allegro, 14134 NE Airport Way, Portland, OR 97230

Nearly a decade separates reedman Levy's debut as a leader, 1977's *Good People* (Reservoir), from his follow-up, and that's unfortunate, because he's a supple soloist and a superb writer of orchestrated small-group sounds. This import from Denmark aligns the New York-based tenorist with the expressive, quick-study cast of bassist Ron McClure (who also records for SteepleChase), pianist George Colligan and drummer Gerry Gibbs. Quick study is right, for this session came about on short notice and was cut in 3 1/2 hours. As such, Levy chose from his stockpile of originals several tunes allowing his mates "to jump right in and blow," he informs CMJ. Two of these originals, the title track and "Three For Me," are eminently airplay-worthy, especially the former, which boasts a direct, singable melody with unusual modulations. The Levy originals "Zinno" (a slow samba named after the Manhattan jazz club) and "Desert Church" (an allusion to Duke Ellington's sacred music, employing a Moorish scale) are equally expressive numbers. For his interpretive covers, the medium-toned Levy chose "Bird's Mother" by Jaki Byard, a B-flat blues the pianist recorded in the early '60s with Eric Dolphy, and "Did I Remember?," a standard from the '20s newly attired with reharmonizations akin to Coltrane's "Giant Steps." That Levy hasn't recorded much in the past decade is no slight on his talents, only on the ears of the industry poobahs. As a matter of fact, label bosses should give a listen to a self-produced quartet date (with pianist Geoff Keezer, bassist Essiet Okon Essiet and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith), a bristling examination of advanced but tuneful form, that the tenorist is shopping around.

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