

niques: Charles Lloyd, Frank Tiberi and Dave Liebman, among others. Marcus also shows a flair for Eddie Harris' lengthy lines made up of scalar intervals of a fourth.

The Coltrane blues "Up 'Gainst the Wall" is a tour de force for Marcus' tenor, with phrases bursting out of the low register and long lines flying through altered chord changes. Hoagy Carmichael's "Skylark" offers a warm ballad perspective of his tenor virtuosity. Bickford's "House of Cads," an angular, rockish line with edgy chords, is Marcus' best soprano performance, his swirling, pentatonic lines and oboe-like tone making a highly charged statement.

Bickford and company conjure up the jazz-rock energy and modal scales of the '60s frequently throughout the album. Sonny Rollins' "Oleo" and Wayne Shorter's "Footprints," trio cuts sans Marcus, show how they rhythmically transform familiar standards. One can imagine how Marcus would have devoured these tunes with the intensity he displays on "Up 'Gainst the Wall." OWEN CORDLE

**MEL MARTIN/  
BENNY CARTER QUINTET**  
*Just Friends* (Jazzed Media)

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
*The Benny Carter Centennial Project*  
(Evening Star)



Benny Carter died in the summer of 2003, just over four years before his centennial anniversary. During his long life, the protean Carter recorded in nine different decades on a half-dozen different instruments, led big bands in America and Europe, was an African-American pioneer in the Hollywood film and TV music fields, and produced significant extended compositions for jazz orchestras into the 1980s and 1990s. As a player, he was best known for his distinctive alto saxophone style (the only major alternative to the Johnny Hodges style in the pre-bop years), although he was also a formidable trumpet and clarinet player during the swing era. As an arranger he helped codify and define big-band jazz writing, especially for reeds, and his large body of memorable work makes him one of the music's premier composers.

Carter was 86 when he joined tenor saxophonist-flutist Mel Martin in April 1994 for a gig at Yoshi's that yielded the live tracks on *Just Friends*. Heard on four of the six total tracks, Carter's alto sax is as suave, tart, swinging and inventive as it was before he became a

senior citizen. He and Martin romp through "Perdido," trade crisp fours on the title tune, and blend lead and obligato lines on "Secret Love." Carter is mesmerizing in his deeply blues-tinged solo on his evocative "Elegy in Blue." Martin's flute and Roger Kellaway's piano reinforce the case for Carter's "People Time" as an indelible jazz standard.

*The Benny Carter Centennial Project* uses a varying cast and the intimacy of small combos to pay tribute to a musician best known for his

big-band accomplishments. Carter's compositions, 14 in all, dominate, including a couple being premiered on record here. But Carter's importance as an arranger for saxophones is also honored on two tracks reprising his charts for "I'm Coming, Virginia" and "All of Me," from 1938 and 1940 recordings.

Most of the musicians on the *Carter Project* worked and/or recorded with Carter, including the constant rhythm section of pianist Chris Neville, bassist Steve LaSpina and



Ernie Andrews



Barbara Morrison



MC/Famed BET Comic  
Reynaldo Rey



Aaron Graves



Billy Valentine



Bootsie Barnes



Red Holloway



Chad Carter



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