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Bigger and Better

MIT Wind Ensemble & MIT Festival Jazz Ensemble, *Infinite Winds* (Sunnyside 1400; 58:34 ★★★★★) On this impressive recording, two MIT ensembles, ably led by director Fred Harris Jr., perform with discipline and conviction on demanding suites that fuse time-honored jazz and wind-band traditions.

Argentine pianist Guillermo Klein's austere "Solar Return Suite" draws on octatonic scales from reeds, brass and a crystalline percussion section. Its textures evoke majestic sweeps of the Patagonian Andes, as Bill McHenry's tenor sax soars like a condor beneath the pitiless sun. Chick Corea's genial "From Forever" (a tribute to mentor Herb Pomeroy on the 50th anniversary of the MIT program he founded) showers solos on those leaping to challenge, notably pianist Peter Godart, vibraphonist Will Grathwohl and saxophonists Sam Heilbronner and Dylan Sherry. Don Byron's "Concerto" zestily pits fellow clarinetist Evan Ziporyn in meticulous craftsmanship opposite spiky winds in three increasingly dramatic—and difficult—movements. Pounding martial rhythms and feral, whirlwind motifs conjure shades of Chavez, Adams, Stravinsky. This entire celebratory undertaking—world premieres, MIT's debut commercial jazz venture, tip-top playing—merits a "Bravo!"

Ordering info: sunnysidezone.com

Western Michigan University Jazz Ensemble, *Songsmith Collective* (Blujazz 3419; 55:04 ★★★★★½) Producer Andrew Rathbun brightly marks his students' tenet with sky-fresh tropes, pristine patterns and serene sing-song. Reedmen Dominic Carioti, Marcus Johnson and Blake Cross contribute placid, searching settings for poems by Frost, Yeats, Langston Hughes and Traci Brimhall. Showcased vocalists Elliott Weeks (plibly logical as Kurt Elling) and Brooke Lauritzen sensitively interpret poems and wordless octave-topping vocales. Though some callow burblings lack grit, tender forms emerge as tightly patterned suites like Carioti's "Presto" and Cross' "Wealth/Ardella."

Ordering info: blujazz.com

Michael Waldrop Big Band, *Time Within*

***Itself* (Origin 82690; 53:24 ★★)** Texas-based drummer Waldrop writes hummable tunes that jump in guess-where twists. Here, he shares bustling charts with ex-boss Jack Cooper (hear *Mists*, his alluring Charles Ives tribute). On the title track, "Munich Musings" and "Twisted Bob," he packs missed crannies with lightning fills. Guitarist Jimi Tunnell and vocalist Sandra Dudley whine like leaf-blowers over snappy charts featuring guitarist Larry Panella and reedman Tim Ishii.

Ordering info: originarts.net

Ted Howe Jazz Orchestra, *Pinnacle* (Hot Shoe Worldwide; 52:21 ★★½) Punchless ensembles nudge along through Atlanta-based pianist Howe's dry compositions, though guests pack some wallop. Trombone guests Andy Martin and Francisco Torres blaze through an opening "Presto," trumpeter Lester Walker nails "Impromptu" with dazzling precision and guest bassist John Patitucci, bouncing gamely and carving snub solos, duos warmly with guitarist Dan Baraszu and buoys drummer Marlon Patton. A lackluster, bookish "Suite" treads but lightly in the footsteps of dedicatee Pomeroy, Howe's 1980 teacher; then an 11-minute piano "Adagio" unfurls sleepily, with grandiloquent interludes.

Ordering info: hotshoorecords.com

Aidan Carroll, *Original Vision* (Truth Revolution 019; 53:52 ★★½) Though light on personnel in this company, Carroll's ambitious quartet-plus date bristles with multi-instrumentalism (he plays basses, keyboards and percussion) and bustles with clear ideas involving shameless melodicism. John Ellis' supple tenor (bolstered by Ben Van Gelder's alto) carries clean, pure front lines that, as on "Apollo Song," blossom rapturously. "Shamanistic" opens with Sullivan Fortner's piano but expands boldly into widening gyres for synthesizer and reeds. Chris Turner sings the gently layered, gospelly "Sundays" recalling Sun Ra and Motown. Shared drum duties by Joe Dyson and Justin Brown underlie subtle currents within Carroll's basslines.

Ordering info: truthrevolutionrecords.com

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