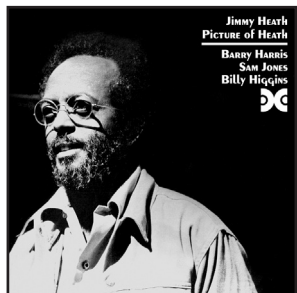


Decisions
Michael Dease (Posi-Tone)
 by George Kanzler

Michael Dease holds down trombone chairs in some of the best big bands in jazz, has led his own big band on his own label and even recorded on other brass instruments and saxophone during his relatively short career (he's 33). But on this latest album for Posi-Tone he abandons most of the many hats he wears in the business to concentrate on just one, showcasing his trombone in a small group with just a rhythm section and adding alto saxophone on half of the 10 selections. It is a formidable display of his virtuosity as one of today's bumper crop of fine young trombonists.

The music here stays largely within parameters of postbop mainstream jazz, the opening two tracks establishing rough boundaries rarely breached. "Grove's Groove", a soul jazz tune by fellow trombonist Steve Davis, kicks things off with the full quintet – Tim Green (alto), Glenn Zaleski (piano), Rodney Whitaker (bass) and Ulysses Owens (drums) – in Jazz Messenger mode, Dease's big, warm tone leading the proceedings. Dease's "Jason's Gonna Get Ya", the quintet track that follows, is a much more complex affair. Beginning with an ostinato bassline and short horn riffs over broken rhythms, it shifts into horn flurries and an extended, romping bebop line, breaking up into tandem soloing from trombone and alto before individual solos, concluding with piano leading back into the elaborate multi-part theme. Dease returns to a soul/hardbop feel in his "Gorgeous Gwen" while exploring more of the intricate path on "Right Place Wrong Time", where the time seems to slip in and out of tempo. Dease's other originals are ballads, some with semi-rubato sections, all displaying his full, sueded tone. On "Everything Must Change" he employs mute and plunger in a change-up mid-section while his fleet, bop-grounded facility is on display for Thad Jones' "Three and One" and his own fast, swinging "The Big D", which sparkles with trombone-drums trades to end the CD.

For more information, visit posi-tone.com. Dease is at Minton's Nov. 1st See Calendar.



Picture of Heath
Jimmy Heath (Xanadu-Elemental Music)
 by Stuart Broomer

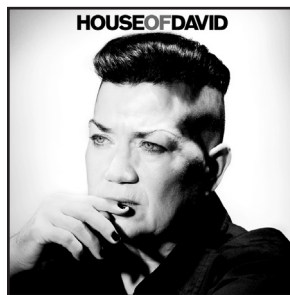
Throughout much of his long career, Jimmy Heath has been thought of as much, or more, as a composer/arranger than as a tenor saxophonist. In Philadelphia in the '40s he led a big band that included saxophonist John Coltrane and trumpeter Johnny Coles and he's led one again since the '90s. Among his Riverside recordings of the early '60s, there's excellent work for bands ranging from sextets to tentets and his writing distinguished recordings by bassist Sam Jones and trumpeter Blue Mitchell, as well as his own. There's a 1956 session by trumpeter Chet Baker and saxophonist

Art Pepper that was first reissued in 1961 as *Picture of Heath*, which includes four Heath compositions (three of them also appear on this *Picture of Heath*).

While there are a few quartet tracks among the Riverside recordings, this 1975 recording places the emphasis squarely on Heath the instrumentalist, fronting a stellar quartet of pianist Barry Harris, Jones and drummer Billy Higgins. If this kind of hardbop was out of fashion by the mid '70s, there's no pandering to trends, no electric piano or fuzz-tone guitar, no strings of fourth chords or backbeats. It's music that might have issued from Riverside 15 years earlier, concentrated blowing on tunes as early as "CTA", first recorded by Heath with Miles Davis in 1953.

Tunes like "For Minors Only" and the title track serve Heath as well as they had served him and others in the near past, as he builds rhythmically forceful, harmonically subtle solos with a manner that at times resembles fellow Philadelphians Coltrane in tone and Benny Golson for nuance. For sheer saxophone artistry, there's a version of "Body and Soul" Heath initially takes on soprano for the theme and his first solo, picking up his tenor after Harris' characteristically boppish, yet lyrical, episode. On "Bruh' Slim", Heath bounces fluently and effortlessly through the changes, passing through an interpolated "Fascinatin' Rhythm" along the way. There's room here for an occasional Jones solo and Higgins trading eights, but the entire session benefits from the special lilt and lift that the bassist and drummer had independently added to dozens of hardbop recordings.

For more information, visit elemental-music.com. Heath is at Village Vanguard Nov. 1st, Flushing Town Hall Nov. 6th as part of the annual NEA Jazz Masters concert and First Corinthian Baptist Church Nov. 13th as part of a Jazzmobile benefit. See Calendar.



House of David
Lea DeLaria (Ghostlight)
 by Suzanne Lorge

Like David Bowie, Lea DeLaria is an iconoclast, an openly gay comic on television and challenging social norms with her portrayals of gender-bending characters on stage and film. The award-winning actor enjoys national celebrity as jailhouse tough Carrie Big Boo Black on Netflix' hit *Orange Is the New Black*. And she's just released her fifth jazz album, *House of David*.

The concept of the album – a jazz reinterpretation of the David Bowie catalog – is funny. But the music itself is serious: there is no dismissing DeLaria's strong vocal jazz chops, the innovative arrangements and her killer band. By the time DeLaria starts scatting with vocalist Janis Siegel on track 4, "Suffragette City", even the most jazz-naïve OITNB fans will note that Big Boo sure can sing.

She includes a swing version of "Let's Dance", "Life On Mars?" as a feeling jazz ballad and "Young Americans" as a classic blues tune. DeLaria collaborated with some notable musicians on the arrangements: composer Janette Mason worked on 7 of the 12 and pianist Kevin Hays on one; the multi-talented Debra Barsha contributed vocal arrangements for the gospel choir on "Modern Love". DeLaria's performances also receive a great deal of support from the musicians that form her rhythm section: besides Hays, bassist Tony Scherr, drummer Kenny Wollesen and percussionist Bashiri Johnson. In short, while *House of David* is a

showcase for DeLaria's considerable vocal abilities, this is an ensemble cast.

The album opens with DeLaria's cool, wailing rendition of "Fame", Bowie's repudiation of the world of popular music and its grandiosity. DeLaria's approach to Bowie's music is anything but grandiose: to each track she brings humility and clear admiration for an artist whose music helps young, struggling iconoclasts make their way through the world. One wonders if today, upon hearing *House of David*, Bowie might see this as an upside to fame.

For more information, visit sh-k-boom.com. This project is at Smoke Nov. 4th and 25th. See Calendar.

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