

Camille Bertault & David Helbock ACT
Playground



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& David Helbock**
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ACT
★★★★★

Eclecticism can be the emptiest of gestures. The clue's in the title. David Helbock may look a serious bloke, but there is an intense playfulness in his work; not whimsy, not satire or pastiche, but simply the sense that music is a playground in which impossible things become possible and unlikely things happen all the time. In this, he has the ideal partner in Camille Bertault,

Grant Stewart
The Lighting Of The Lamps

CELLAR
★★★★½

This is the type of session that bebop fans love. It features a classic tenor-trumpet quintet, high-quality solos that are full of enthusiasm and excitement and revivals of some obscure gems.

Grant Stewart, a tenor saxophonist whose tone occasionally reminds one of Paul Gonsalves and early Benny Golson although his ideas are his own, leads his longtime quartet with pianist Tardo Hammer, bassist David Wong and drummer Phil Stewart, plus the fiery trumpeter Bruce Harris. It makes for a potent combination.

Their repertoire includes two rarely played Clifford Jordan songs (the jazz waltz "Little Spain" and "Bearcat"), Thad Jones' "Bitty Ditty," Benny Golson's "Out Of The Past," Elmo Hope's "Mo Is On" (a rapid run through of rhythm changes) and Stewart's "A Piece Of Art."

The latter has a pair of Art Tatum phrases in its melody and utilizes the chord changes of "All God's Children Got Rhythm." Hammer's piano solo here is very much in the Bud Powell tradition. The two standards are renditions of

who has her own sense of mischief.

It's significant that the other artists nodded to in the course of *Playground* are Egberto Gismonti (the opening "Frevo"), the arch-trickster Thelonious Monk ("Ask Me Now") and, right at the end, a tribute to the puckish Hermeto Pascoal, whose early work is currently enjoying a revival.

The air of mystery is sustained in the originals, notably Helbock's "Das Fabelwesen," meaning "mythical creature," as well as Bertault's wistful "Bizarre" and Poulenc-like "Aide-moi."

These players have classical backgrounds, but as "Lonely Supamen" shows, they know the blues as well, even if their take on the form is unusual. They incorporate everything, from Russian and Icelandic mysticism to cryptozoology.

Jazz has always been large, always contained multitudes, but it's acts like this — and labels like ACT — that keep the door open for new influences and experiences.

—Brian Morton

Playground: Frevo; Good Morning Heartache; Lonely Supamen; Etude In C-Sharp Minor, Op. 2, No 1; Aide-moi; New World; Das Fabelwesen; Dans ma boîte; Ask Me Now; Never Lived; Bizarre; Para Hermeto (52.37)

Personnel: Camille Bertault, voice; David Helbock, piano, percussion, live looping, effects.

Ordering info: actmusic.com



"Ghost Of A Chance" and "I'm A Fool To Want You" that are taken a bit faster than usual.

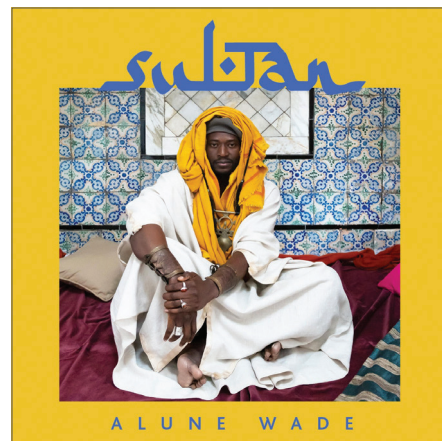
Clearly these musicians were not in the mood to play slow ballads, and coasting was not an option. One can sense the feeling of happiness at this session from November 2021 that the musicians must have had in getting to final-ly play live with others.

—Scott Yanow

The Lighting Of The Lamps: Little Spain; A Piece Of Art; Ghost Of A Chance; Out Of The Past; Mo Is On; I'm A Fool To Want You; Bearcat; Bitty Ditty. (56:10)

Personnel: Grant Stewart, tenor; Bruce Harris, trumpet Tardo Hammer, piano; David Wong, bass; Phil Stewart, drums.

Ordering info: cellarlive.com



Alune Wade
Sultan

ENJA
★★★★

Alune Wade's first outing, *Mbolo*, was a fusion of Afrobeat, jazz and traditional West African sounds, a recipe he largely follows here. But this time, he includes highlife, rap, Cuban, North African and Middle Eastern sounds, creating an international mix that's both familiar and distinctive. The music was recorded in Tunisia, Paris, New York, Turkey and Cuba, by an impressive list of players, then assembled in the studio with the help of producer Nic Hard.

"Nasty Sand" is a funky blues tune, punctuated by R&B flavored horn blasts and shredding guitar solos by Guimba Kouyate. "Café Oran" celebrates the fusion of styles that evolved in Tunisia and gave birth to rai. The horn lines suggest the ornamentation of flamenco, while Wade's simple bass line is echoed by the band's scatted vocals.

"Dalaka" rides a syncopated rhythm, anchored by an acoustic piano, with a hint of son Cubano in the melody line. The vocal chorus laments the tribulations of Africans forced to flee their homeland due to climate change and political instability. The title track blends African, Cuban and Arabic elements with Wade's propulsive bass. Midway through, they slip into a ska-like rhythm to bring the track home.

—j. poet

Sultan: Saba's Journey, Donso, Sultan, Nasty Sand, Uthiopic, Portrait de Maure, Djolof Blues, Dalaka, L'ombre de l'âme, Lullaby For Sultan, Célébration, Café Oran. (61:29)

Personnel: Alune Wade, bass; Christian Sands, piano; Cédric Duchemann, Farfisa organ, Rhodes pump keyboard, organ; Bobby Spark, keyboards, organ; Hugues Mayot, tenor, soprano and baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Carlos Sarduy, trumpet; Cyril Atef, drums; Mustapha Sahbi, oud, guembri; Adriano Tenoriodd, percussion; Cheikh Anta Ndiaye, sabar; Senegalese percussion; Leo Genovese, piano, keyboard; Draman Dembele, flute; Mounir Troudi, vocal; Malika Zarra, vocals; López-Nussa, piano; Paco Sery, Drums, triangle; Hein Benmiloud, flute, Zokra; Nasreddine Chebli, percussion; Guimba Kouyate, guitar; Thomas Henning, trombone; Mehdi Nassouri, Gnawa vocals; Aziz Sahmaoui, Gnawa vocals; Daniel Blake, soprano and tenor saxophone; Josh Deutsch, trumpet; Nora Mint Seymali, vocals; Adriano Tenorio, percussion; Lenney White, drums; Djiam, rapper; Eric Mouquet, piano, keyboards; Ismail Lumanovski, clarinet; Laurent Bonet, alto saxophone; Daril Esso, drums; Faris Ishaq, flute; PPS the Writah, rap.

Ordering info: alunewade.bandcamp.com