

JAZZ TOKYO

Jazz and Far Beyond

2. ジョー・カートライトがいる | 関口登人

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Kansas City

"Joe Cartwright Is Here" -- Nobuto Sekiguchi

In this issue, let's take a look at Joe Cartwright, a pianist who has already built up a solid reputation in Kansas City, Missouri.

Cartwright was born in Kansas City in December 1954, so he's now (as of August 2007) 53 years old. Between the ages of seven and 16 he studied piano under a private teacher. Later he studied classical piano at the Conservatory of Music at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and thereafter becoming active as a professional musician. In 1987, Cartwright entered the first Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition, finishing as a semifinalist. Although he seems to leave his home base of Kansas City only infrequently, he has performed with a truly diverse array of musicians: Eddie Harris, Sheila Jordan, Bill Watrous, Conte Condoli, Jeff Clayton, Rob McConnell, Carl Fontana, Red Holloway, Karrin Allyson, Tiger Okoshi, Clark Terry, Kevin Mahogany, Mel Torme, and even the recently deceased Max Roach. Cartwright also takes part in programs with classical orchestras, and is a winner of the Missouri Music Teachers Classical Piano Competition. In terms of musical education and technique, he is without a doubt particularly outstanding.



Photo by Chris Crabtree

Recently, Cartwright's usual format seems to be his own duo or trio, or as a quartet with invited guests. The schedule on his website shows two-thirds of the month to be filled by gigs at hotel lounges (including the city's InterContinental Hotel), restaurant stages, jazz clubs, and art centers. From this can be adduced the height of both his reputation and his popularity. Looking at his calendar, the eye is drawn to the "Best of Kansas City Jazz" Series at the InterContinental Hotel, where every Thursday Cartwright's own trio has been bringing in a local musician to play today's Kansas City jazz as a quartet. The guest players include such musicians as trumpeters Mike Metheny (Pat's older brother) and Stan Kessler, and saxophonists Bobby Watson and Ahmad Alaadeen, who was covered here two issues ago. This series is of course being recorded, and the intention is that it will eventually be released on CD. Through activities such as these, Cartwright has set down roots in Kansas City and is contributing to the jazz scene in a big way.

Now I'd like to introduce two albums I've obtained that showcase what he has to offer.



『SOUL EYES / JOE CARTWRIGHT』

1. DREMSVILL. 2. OJOS DE ROJO 3. ALWAYS AND FOREVER. 4. LOVE WALKED IN. 5. FALL. 6. SOUL EYES. 7. HEBGAN HAPPY HOUR.

Joe Cartwright(p) Bob Bowman(b) Todd Strait(ds)

Tracks 3,4 and 5 were recorded live in the oak bar ,Fairmont, Kansas City on March 18,2004.

Track 6 was recorded live at Kansas Public Radio on March 20,2004

Tracks 1,2 and 7 were recorded live at the Topeka Performing Art Center on March 21,2004

オープニングのヘンリー・マンシーニ「ドリームズヴィル」には、思わずニンマリさせられる。メリハリの利いたずっしりと深みのある音色で織り成すメロディーラインはなめらかで、とても長く、よく構成されたセンテンスを展開して見せる。ベースのボブ・ボウ

With the opening track, Henry Mancini's "Dreamsville," one can't help but to grin in satisfaction. The well-modulated, weighty and deep tones that combine to form the melody line are smooth, and grow into extremely lengthy, well-structured sentences. Bob Bowman's bass and Todd Strait's drums each back the solo with organic interplay. It occurred to me that although the style of piano is different, the trio format is close to the concept of Bill Evans. However, Cartwright additionally provides dynamism as well, and perhaps because the track is live, this achieves a corresponding amount of escape from becoming difficult to resolve. The songs are five instrumental originals from such people as Cedar Walton, Pat Metheny, Wayne Shorter, and Mal Waldron, as well as two other songs, from Mancini and Gershwin, and all give rise to a pleasurable thrill by maintaining an exquisite balance between tension and release through Cartwright's refined musicality. Let's take a look at the side members.

Bob Bowman on bass has performed with the Toshiko Akiyoshi/Lew Tabackin Big Band, the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Big Band, and others, as well as in combos with Freddie Hubbard and Bud Shank, and has already earned a solid reputation. In 1981 he accompanied Carmen McRae on her tour in Japan. He recently relocated to Kansas City, but also tours with Karrin Allyson.

Like the other two members, drummer Todd Strait is a Kansas native. He left at an early age and honed his skills in New York City, playing in the bands of Marian McPartland, Tal Farlow, Woody Herman, and others. At the beginning of 1990s he relocated to Kansas City, and has worked with Karrin Allyson, Kevin Mahogany, and many other musicians. He toured Japan with Mahogany. Mr. Strait currently resides in Portland, Oregon.

This album could be called a perfect choice for anyone who wants to hear piano with a slightly novel feel.



『LA LUNA NEGRA / Joe Cartwright』

1. Saudad. 2. Manteca. 3. Jacob' Ladder. 4. Sanba Feliz. 5. La Luna Negra 6. Peruchin. 7. Cold Duck Time. 8. On Fire.

Joe Cartwright(p) Steve Rigazzi(b) Doug Auwarter(ds,perc) Gary Helm(perc) Luiz Moriera(agogo)

Recorded at Soundtrek Recording Studios, Kansas City, Missouri, June 7,1999 and July 28, 1999

オールラウンダー、ジョー・カートライトのラテンジャズ・アルバム傑作。

彼は1990年代半ばにブラジルとキューバの音楽にインスパイアされていたが、やがてアルバム作りを思い立った。すぐにメンバーを探し始めたが、カートライトいわく「ふたりの素晴らしいパーカショニスト」を見つけた。ダグ・アウワーターとゲイリー・ヘルムだ。また、ベーシストにはヨーロッパ滞在中にチャット・ベイカーやエンリコ・ラヴァとの共演歴もあるスティーブ・リガッツィ

This album is a masterpiece of Latin jazz from all-rounder Joe Cartwright.

In the mid-1990s, Cartwright was inspired by the music of Brazil and Cuba, and eventually decided to make an album. He immediately began looking for members, and found, in his words, "two wonderful percussionists." These were Doug Auwarter and Gary Helm. Also, as bassist is Steve Rigazzi, who performed with Chet Baker and Enrico Rava while living in Europe, and in Rigazzi's attitude of allowing music to soar, Cartwright seems to have sensed a kindred regard for his own concept of music. In this way, recalls Cartwright, he threw himself over into making the album while receiving extensive and powerful advice and assistance from the other members.

The selected songs are compositions by musicians that Cartwright has worked with or otherwise admires -- including Dizzy Gillespie, Eddie Harris, Bill Cunliffe, Michel Camilo, and Walter Booker -- and extend over a diverse range of styles.

The performances live up to expectations, and despite the participation of two powerful percussionists, Cartwright's deft piano rings out clearly, extolling an abstracted, supernatant beauty and tension with none of that type of vulgarity that some hold to be one of the attractions of Latin music. This imparts an impression of what could be termed a "sense of cool, tropical sprinting," and is quite comfortable. Though I may be wrong, I imagine that live performances are a bit longer and therefore a bit higher in temperature.

At the end of the liner notes, Cartwright punningly notes that the album "represents the fruit of [his] passion for Latin jazz." I invite you to take a bite of this fruit.



(Nobuto Sekiguchi - Jazz Tokyo)
Jazz Critic

JAZZ TOKYO

Jazz and Far Beyond

February, 2008

*Kansas
Jazz*

■『ザ・ベスト・オブ・カンザス・シティ・ジャズ/Vol.1』

1. イースト・オブ・ザ・サン
2. レッド・トップ
3. リトル・スエード・シューズ
4. ジャンゴ
5. エブリデイ・アイ・ラブ・ザ・ブルース
6. ナットウィル
7. タイム・リメンバード
8. ティーチ・ミー・トゥナイト
9. ウィル・ビー・トゥゲザー・アゲイン
10. ワン・ノート・サンバ

■『ザ・ベスト・オブ・カンザス・シティ・ジャズ/Vol.2』

1. ブルースウィル
2. 帰ってくれて嬉しいわ
3. セプテンバー・ソング
4. エンジェル・アイズ
5. アイヴ・グロウン・アカストムド・トゥ・ユア・フェイス
6. エミリー
7. デライラ
8. ムーディー・ムード・フォー・ラヴ
9. ウィズアウト・ア・ソング

<http://www.joe-cartwright.com/recordings/index.html>

前回のジョー・カートライトの紹介の中でも触れたが、毎週木曜日、彼のピアノトリオに、カンザス在住でワールド・クラスと彼が評価するミュージシャンを招いて共演してきた。彼はこの記録をいずれシリーズとしてCD化したいという希望をあためていたが、いよいよそれが実現して、今回VOL.1,2が送られてきた。

ライブからのセレクションなので、ゲストのミュージシャンひとりに与えられるのはほとんど1曲、たまに2曲というアレンジメントにならざるをえないが、それでもかなりの数のゲストが今後登場するものと見られる。今回の2作品では、13人のゲストがもちろんライブでカートライト・トリオと共演を繰り広げている。その大半は日本ではなじみのないミュージシャンだが、このシリーズをきっかけに現在のカンザス・シティ・ジャズへの認識と理解が深まるかも知れない。

VOL.1では、真珠十分なボビー・ワトソンがワン&オンリーなプレイを見せる(3)、スタン・ケスラーのトランペットがさえる(6)、フルトーンのアルトサクスを高しめるキム・パークの(9)、[VI]を操り、新境地をうかがうマイク・メセニーの(10)など、いずれも「聴けて、もう1曲！」が聴きたくなるトラックが続く。

VOL.2はウェイン・ゴインズの速者でグルービーなギターが痛快な(1)、バリトン・ボイスにありがちな重さとは無縁の軽やかさと涼やかなフレーズが身上的ダック・ワーナーは(2)と(8)の2曲が収められている。(9)ではギターがダニー・エンブレイが途切れることなく繰り出してくるクールでアキュレートなメロディーで流れてくる。キム・パークとマイク・メセニーはVOL.1とは異なったアプローチを披露している。

本シリーズを聞いて、カートライトが企図したのはジャズが持つ大きな醍醐味であり、かつ魅力のひとつであるスポンテニアスなサプライズを引き出すことではなかったかと思うが、確かにそれは成功している。しかもそこには伝統をしっかり受け継ぎながらも、現在そして未来も視野に入れながら「進歩に」シーンを展開させていく多様性とポテンシャルが秘められている。

ところで、それにしても一番楽しんでいるのはカートライト・トリオではないか、と思った次第。トリオのレギュラーメンバーであるジェラルド・スパイトは、カンザスを訪れるビッグネームからもしばしば声がかかるベーシストだが、このシリーズでも、ほぼ全編で柔軟なベースラインと独創的なソロでユニットを支えている。トニー・ラスキンはすでにズート・シムズ、クラーク・テリー、カール・フォンタナなどとも共演を重ねたベテランで、夫人の歌手ジュリー・ターナーとの活動をともにしているが、センシティブなプレイを評価され、よく声がかかるようだ。(9)では、ゲストがギターリストということあり、二人の快活なベースとドラムスが楽しめる。そこにカートライトが縦横無尽に鍵盤を走っているのだ。楽しくないはずがない。(COJAC会員)

2. The Best of Kansas City Jazz

As I mentioned in my earlier article about Joe Cartwright, he performs every Thursday in a piano trio with invited guests -- world-class musicians and others he admires in Kansas City. He long entertained the hope of releasing these recordings as a series of CDs, and at long last, this has come to fruition with the arrival of volumes 1 and 2.

Because these are composed of selections of his live performances, the arrangements unavoidably limit nearly every guest musician to one song, occasionally two, yet even so, a considerably large number of guests seem to make an appearance. On these two albums, 13 guests engage in impassioned performances -- live, of course -- with the Joe Cartwright Trio. Many of these are musicians whose names are little known in Japan, but this series might be the catalyst for enhancing awareness of the Kansas City jazz of today.

Volume 1 includes the one and only appearance of the mighty Bobby Watson on song 3, the trumpet of Stan Kessler resounding on 6, the enjoyment of the full tones of the Kim Park's alto sax on 9, and Mike Metheny opening new vistas through his mastery of the electronic valve instrument on 10. One after another, every track you listen to pulls you in and makes you want to hear one more.

Volume 2 includes the thrill of Wayne Goins' masterful and groovy guitar on song 1, and Duck Warner, with his characteristic nimble and smooth phrasing far unlike the heaviness that is all too common to baritone voices, appears on both 2 and 8. Song 9 is driven by the cool and accurate melody delivered without interruption by Danny Embrey on guitar. Kim Park and Mike Metheny each demonstrate an approach unlike that found on Volume 1.

Listening to this series, I believe that Cartwright's intent is to elicit the spontaneous surprise that is one of the major appeals and attractions of jazz, and at this he has definitely succeeded. What's more, even as tradition is solidly maintained here, lurking within are diversity and potential that dependably lead to new scenes, even as the point of view embraces the present as well as the future.

Incidentally, it even seems that the ones who are nonetheless having the most fun here may be the Cartwright Trio. Trio regular Gerald Spait is a bassist frequently called upon by big names who visit Kansas City, and on this series as well, he supports the unit with flexible bass lines and creatively original solos on nearly all arrangements. Tommy Ruskin is a veteran of abundant experience, having played with Zoot Sims, Clark Terry, Carl Fontana, and others, and also works with his wife, vocalist Julie Turner. His sensitive play has earned high acclaim and made him a sought-after player. On song 9, the guest is the guitarist, and the congenial bass and guitar of these two players can be enjoyed. And through it all Cartwright's keyboard runs with unrestricted energy. What's not to enjoy?

—Nobuto Sekiguchi



Jam

Jazz Ambassador Magazine

Joe Cartwright

The Best of Kansas City Jazz: Volume I

Lafayette Music-2005

Personnel: all tracks except track 2, Joe Cartwright, piano; Gerald Spaits, (tracks 1, 4, 6, 8, 9), Bob Bowman (tracks 5 and 7), Tyrone Clark (tracks 3 and 10), bass; Ray DeMarchi, drums; Rod Fleeman, guitar, track 1; David Basse, vocal, track 2; Bryan Hicks, bass and vocal, track 2; Bill Goodwin, drums, track 2; Oscar Williams, piano, track 2; Bobby Watson, alto sax, track 3; Duck Warner, vocal, track 5; Stan Kessler, trumpet, track 6; Paul McKee, trombone, track 7; Sharon Thompson, vocal, track 8; Kim Park, alto sax, track 9; Mike Metheny, EVI, track 10.

Tracks: East of the Sun; Red Top; Little Suede Shoes; Django; Every Day I Have the Blues; Nutville; Time Remembered; Teach Me Tonight; We'll Be Together Again; One Note Samba.

Recorded live from February 2004 to July 2004, Oak Bar, Fairmont at the Plaza, Kansas City, MO. Engineer & mixing: Chris Crabtree. Mastered by Craig Rettmer, CR Sound.

Flip through the titles of *The Best of Kansas City Jazz: Volume I* and you will find among the composers Lionel Hampton, Charlie Parker, Sammy Cahn, and Gene DePaul. Joe Cartwright's most recent release comes flooded with historical tunes, all with a connection to the vibrant Kansas City jazz scene. To hear the best compositions, Cartwright gives us some of the best performers to boot.

Cartwright himself is considered one of Kansas City's best performers as well. The jazz pianist has lived, performed, and taught in the Kansas City area for nearly a quarter of a century and is a graduate of the UMKC Conservatory of Music. In addition to performing on numerous recordings of other artists, Cartwright has produced many of his own leading his own duo, trio, and quartet, some of whom appear on numerous tracks.

Right from the start, Cartwright gives us the feel of this *Best of...* release. Having been recorded within the Oak Bar, the live atmosphere is captured and preserved. This gives listeners a chance to close their eyes and melt into a comfortable chair in the crowd. You can just barely catch the tinkle of glasses and the muted chit chat as "East of the Sun" bursts forth onto the scene. The background noise gives way to the musicians, and only one small outburst—one of appreciation—is caught midway through Ray DeMarchi's great drum solo in this fine start to the CD.

Up next is Lionel Hampton's great "Red Top." This is the only track on the disc that Joe Cartwright has stepped away from and features Oscar Williams on the piano. David Basse and Bryan Hicks lend their voices to this rousing rendition and kick in a set of vocal scat to the composition. Cartwright follows up with another jazz great, "Little Suede Shoes," composed by Charlie Parker. Taking over the helm at alto saxophone is Bobby Watson. Watson returned to Kansas City to teach and became actively involved in the local jazz scene, helping to raise the city's jazz credibility. His performance in this track is worthy of all the praise he has received over the years, and Parker himself would be proud of Watson's rendition.

"Django" comes up next on the listings of tracks. This track, for the opening minute, is masquerading as a somber European classical song. It quickly takes a sharp corner; the pace is picked up, the instruments begin to rise up and throw off their classical restraints, and the composition becomes a moving bebop number. Gerald Spaits' bass work is amazing as is Ray DeMarchi's work on the drums. To round out the song, "Django" slides back into its classical feel with Joe Cartwright showing his versatility and prowess on the piano.

JOE CARTWRIGHT PRESENTS THE BEST OF KANSAS CITY JAZZ

VOLUME 1



featuring

BOBBY WATSON ROD FLEEMAN DUCK WARNER SHARON THOMPSON
STAN KESSLER PAUL MCKEE DAVID BASSE KIM PARK MIKE METHENY

Duck Warner chimes in on track 5 with "Every Day I Have the Blues." Warner also plays the trombone and leads his own band, but joins Cartwright's group on this track with a true soulful touch of attitude. This jazz tune, obviously mixed with the blues, has just about everything one could want on a recording: great instrument manipulation, a great voice, and perfect melding of both.

The delectable "Nutville" comes up next. The lightning-quick trumpet work of Stan Kessler overtakes this track and for good reason. Woody Shaw originally took the lead in Horace Silver's release, and the trumpet is the embodiment of the tune, regardless of whether it is Shaw or Kansas City's great Kessler giving it life. "Time Remembered" slows the pace down just a bit. Paul McKee, a relative newcomer on the Kansas City scene, leads the group this go-round. While his trombone is the dominant instrument in this track, McKee graciously allows the fine work of the other musicians to break forth as well.

Wow! Sharon Thompson's voice on Cahn and DePaul's "Teach Me Tonight" is reminiscent of other great jazz vocalists such as Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, and Shirley Horn. Thompson throws a bit of jazz, a sprinkle of the blues, and just a touch of gospel into this track. Listen to this one over and over again. This recording has the making of a true vocal jazz classic. "We'll Be Together Again" allows us to sit back, take a rest, and really savor the song. Kim Park's alto saxophone sounds as though it dimmed our lights, poured us a smooth drink, and led us into a relaxing night. Mike Metheny's famous Electronic Valve Instrument makes a wonderful appearance on the final track, "One Note Samba." Metheny's range of synthetic articulation is amazing, and his well-known connection to

Kansas City is a great way to close out *The Best of Kansas City Jazz: Volume I*.

I hope that Joe Cartwright is able to produce the second volume of this series in quick time. I believe he will have a hard time outdoing himself on this volume, but if anyone can do it, Cartwright can. If you would like to attend the CD release party, a live performance will celebrate the release on Sunday, December 4, at Jardines from 7-11 p.m.

—Tristan Smith

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JAZZ

Jam

Jazz Ambassador Magazine

Joe Cartwright Presents The Best of Kansas City Jazz Volume 2

Lafayette Music 1990

Personnel: Wayne Goins, guitar (1); Duck Warner, vocals (2 and 8); Kim Park, alto sax (3) and flute (6); Mike Metheny, flugelhorn (4); Pamela Baskin-Watson, vocals (5); Ahmad Alaadeen, soprano sax (7); Danny Embrey, guitar (5 and 9); Joe Cartwright, piano (all) and synth bass (2 and 8); Gerald Spaits, bass (1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9); Tyrone Clark, bass (4); Tom DeMasters, guitar (2 and 8); Ray DeMarchi, drums (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8); Tommy Ruskin, drums (5 and 9)

Tracks: Bluesville, You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To, September Song, Angel Eyes, I've Grown Accustomed To Your Face, Emily, Delilah, Moody's Mood For Love, Without a Song

Recorded at the Oak Bar in the InterContinental Hotel and Jardine's Restaurant and Jazz Club. Location engineer and mixing: Chris Crabtree. Mastering: Craig Rettmer, CR Sound. Produced by Joe Cartwright. Executive Producers: Henry and Carolyn Rankin and Merle Stalder.

When Joe Cartwright told me he was releasing a CD of his Best of Kansas City series, he said that the hardest part about it was selecting the tracks. He knew then that he had a couple of discs worth of material and hinted that there could be a Volume 2. Sure enough, he did have plenty of material, and Volume 2 was released at the end of 2007.

The series started out as a special Sunday evening feature at the Oak Bar, then moved to Thursday nights, before transitioning to a monthly Thursday at Jardine's a couple of years ago. The format hardly changed: Joe's long-time trio with Gerald Spaits and Ray DeMarchi hosting a guest soloist. The formula is the same here with a couple of exceptions where Tommy Ruskin played drums and Tyrone Clark or Cartwright (with a synthesizer) took over the bass.

The proceedings start with a groover by Sonny "Red" Kyner, "Bluesville", featuring Dr. Wayne Goins. Goins shows how to swing a blues, climaxes with some Wes Montgomery octaves, and he has the full force of the Cartwright trio to help out. Ray DeMarchi catches the fire and keeps the excitement going through a fine turn from Joe. Gerald Spaits' bass solo is no less swinging, and band and DeMarchi exchange a few choruses of fours before the descending solo line returns. This is a great example of what the Cartwright trio – and Goins – reliably do every time out.



Duck Warner has been a Cartwright regular for a few years now, and he is showcased twice here. On "You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To", his scat chops are on display, while "Moody's Mood" gives him a ballad feature. Duck has one of the warmest voices on the planet. Tom DeMasters is the guitarist on the Warner tracks, and has a fine solo on the latter cut.

Kim Park is also on two tracks. "September Song" is a rocker, with Park's wailing alto right out of Hank Crawford, and Cartwright feeling bluesy, too. There might be a few backbeats from DeMarchi in there as well. Pass the gravy, please. "Emily" couldn't be more of a contrast, a jazz waltz, taken quicker than at a ballad tempo, and one of Johnny Mandel's most memorable (and beautiful) melodies. Park plays flute here... the tune is made for the flute. Cartwright, Park, and Spaits each solo on this track.

Ahmad Alaadeen has a fuller sound than most on soprano sax, and the soprano fits very well on "Delilah", with its Middle East feel (it worked well with Clifford Brown's muted trumpet, too, remember!). The Gerald Spaits bass line won't let go, either. Nor does the steady brush-on-cymbal beat and mallet accents from Ray DeMarchi. It's all mysterious and beautiful.

Mike Metheny really understands the mood of "Angel Eyes", the great song of a love lost. It's a serious song. The flugelhorn in Metheny's hand is an expressive instrument. Cartwright can nail ballads, too, as is evident from his solo and sensitive support.

Pamela Baskin-Watson takes "I've Grown Accustomed To Your Face" as an up-tempo bossa nova; might as well when bossa master Danny Embrey is on the stand with you. I like the way she plays with the melody just a little, enough to give this treatment a lift. Not that it needs much help, as the rhythm is a steady catalyst, courtesy of the Embrey/Cartwright/Spaits/Ruskin team. Check out Danny's lines on the fade. The same band without Pamela is back on "Without a Song", and is Danny's real feature. Ruskin has a nice release on the bridge in the melody statement, a hint of the straight 4/4 to come in Embrey's solo. Then, hear how Master Tommy carves up the rhythm later in the solo! Then how he switches to a different cymbal and gets an entirely different sound for Joe's solo? And there he is again, on the high hat behind Gerald Spaits' melodic solo, and still carving up the rhythm! And then there he is when they come back to the top with some nice snare work. All is wonderful here, another one for the highlight film, but really listen to Tommy. Ladies and gentlemen, on drums we have the Master, Tommy Ruskin!

But that's the whole point of the release (as was Volume 1), to bring us the Best of Kansas City.

I haven't inquired, but my sense is that selecting what to include in Volume 2 was just as trying as with Volume 1. Enough for a third volume? I would not be surprised.

—Roger Atkinson



JOE CARTWRIGHT QUARTET

La Luna Negra

Lafayette Music

I have long argued that Joe Cartwright is the most underrated, under-recorded pianist in Kansas City and that he is a strong contender for world-class honors.

"La Luna Negra" goes a considerable distance in correcting Cartwright's tragic lack of recorded material. To my knowledge, the only other recording fronted by the pianist is "Triplicity," a trio date from the early 1990s available only on cassette (my copy is nearly worn out).

Reflecting his recent interest in Brazilian music, "La Luna Negra" is an energetic Latin-tinged session featuring Steve Rigazzi on bass, Doug Auwarter on drums and percussion and Gary Helm on additional percussion. As Cartwright writes in the liner notes, "La Luna Negra represents the fruit of my passion for Latin jazz."

This basket of passion fruit contains such sweet delights as Waiter Booker's "Saudade," Dizzy Gillespie's "Manteca," Bill Cuniff's "Samba Feliz" and Michel Camilo's "On Fire," but my favorites are the 14-minute exploration of Cedar Walton's "Jacob's Ladder," the beautiful title track by Michael Melvoin and the soulful take on Eddie Harris' "Cold Duck Time," that finishes with an irresistible tension-and-release section.

Cartwright's two-fisted attack always has reminded me of Gene Harris. Like Harris, he has a sure sense of time, an appreciation for the blues and a confident, propulsive quality that heightens the excitement level of everything he plays.

JOE CARTWRIGHT
Soul Eyes

Lafayette Music

By Tom Ineck

"Soul Eyes" is the definitive recording for which longtime Joe Cartwright fans have been waiting, a live trio project that exemplifies the Kansas City pianist's power and virtuosity in extended performances over a range of material.

It is hard to imagine a threesome more compatible than this one, as Cartwright is joined by KC stalwarts Bob Bowman on bass and Todd Strait on drums. Bowman's fleet fingers, adventurous solo excursions and innate sense of time are perfectly matched to Strait's percussive genius and sensitivity. Of course, it is Cartwright's playing that shines most brightly. Lush arpeggios, crisp, clean single-note lines (at any tempo), soulful blues inflections and stunning dynamics are just a few of his trademark qualities.

The Topeka Performing Arts Center is the setting for three tunes, including Henry Mancini's classic "Dreamsville," Cedar Walton's keyboard workout "Ojos de Rojo" and Bowman's lively "Hebgan Happy Hour." The Oak Bar of the Fairmont Kansas City hotel is the scene for Pat Metheny's lovely "Always and Forever," Gershwin's "Love Walked In" and Wayne Shorter's "Fall," and Kansas Public Radio captured the trio's rendition of the title track by Mal Waldron.

"Ojo de Rojo" is a case in point, with Cartwright building the intensity before handing it off to Bowman for an inspired solo. Strait then makes an inventive solo statement on cymbals and toms. In like manner, Bowman begins the 15-minute "Love Walked In" with a bluesy bass blast, setting the stage for a lengthy and soulful exploration by Cartwright, followed by briefer, but equally splendid bass and drum solos.

The three ballad selections, "Dreamsville," "Always and Forever" and "Soul Eyes," capture the trio in its most sensitive interplay. Metheny's gentle tune is especially affecting in its honest, unabashed romanticism. Bowman and Strait show admirable restraint on the title track, clearly a showcase for Cartwright's astonishing keyboard prowess.

Recorded at three different venues last March, the sound throughout is well engineered and amazingly unified. With just seven tracks totaling more than 70 minutes, "Soul Eyes" is a generous package perfect for the gift-giving season. To order the CD, visit Joe Cartwright's website at <http://www.joe-cartwright.com/>.

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JOE CARTWRIGHT

The Best of Kansas City Jazz Vol. 1
Lafayette Music

By Tom Ineck

After years of leading the Best of Kansas City Jazz Series in the Oak Bar at the Fairmont Kansas City, pianist Joe Cartwright had compiled some 24 hours of live, recorded music. With “The Best of Kansas City Jazz, Vol. 1,” he begins to share some of those memorable moments with those of us who were unable to attend.

Recorded between February and July 2004, each of the 10 tracks features a prominent KC jazz artist, with Cartwright himself confidently fronting the rhythm section with his impeccable keyboard work on all but one. For David Basse’s showcase, Lionel Hampton’s “Red Top,” the singer brought along his own outfit—pianist Oscar Williams, bassist Bryan Hicks and drummer Bill Goodwin.

Guitarist Rod Fleeman brings his ebullient style to “East of the Sun,” and virtuosic alto saxophonist Bobby Watson turns Charlie Parker’s “Little Suede Shoes” every which way but loose. With his soulful, urbane vocal style, Duck Warner turns Memphis Slim’s “Every Day I Have the Blues” into a sophisticated blues number. Trumpeter Stan Kessler expertly navigates Horace Silver’s difficult “Nutville” with brassy flair, taste and imagination.

Trombonist Paul McKee shows his warm tone and considerable technique on Bill Evans’ “Time Remembered.” Singer Sharon Thompson testifies with gospel-tinged soulfulness on “Teach Me Tonight,” which also features a bluesy solo by Cartwright. Kim Park caresses the wistful changes of “We’ll Be Together Again” with his fluent alto saxophone, and trumpeter Mike Metheny interprets Jobim’s “One Note Samba” on the EVI (electronic valve instrument).

Cartwright’s authoritative presence is felt throughout this recording, but he really gets a chance to shine on John Lewis’ classic “Django,” with bassist Gerald Spaits and drummer Ray DeMarchi. A veteran of late-night KC jam sessions, he can comp and lend harmonic and rhythmic support to any occasion, but his prodigious playing talents are often understated in his role as accompanist. The alternating tempos and moods of “Django” perfectly illustrate his technical accomplishment, sensitivity, and improvisational skills.

When the spotlight is on the featured soloists, it’s easy to overlook the essential rhythm players who make them sound so good. Spaits provides the bass foundation on five tracks, Bob Bowman on two and Tyrone Clark on two. DeMarchi’s solid and sensitive support on drums can be heard on nine tracks.

JOE CARTWRIGHT

The Best of Kansas City Jazz Vol. 2
Lafayette Music

By Tom Ineck

Joe Cartwright continues to mine the rich vein of Kansas City jazz with a second volume of live recordings featuring the best of KC's contemporary music talent. While holding down his seat as house pianist at several venues over the years, Cartwright has documented a wealth of material, and with his latest release he again shares the wealth with us.

Recorded in the Oak Bar at the InterContinental Kansas City at the Plaza and at Jardine's Restaurant and Jazz Club, "The Best of Kansas City Jazz Vol. 2" is a generous package of nine tracks totaling 70 minutes and ranging from instrumental and vocal tunes to jazz standards and the blues. The versatile and virtuosic Cartwright confidently drives the proceedings, with bassist Gerald Spaits and drummer Ray DeMarchi usually providing the rock-solid rhythm. Drummer Tommy Ruskin is on two tracks, and bassist Tyrone Clark is present on one.

Even for those of us who are familiar with many of the city's jazz artists, there are a few pleasant surprises here, including the opening track, "Bluesville," with the exciting and imaginative guitarist Wayne Goins playing in a style reminiscent of Wes Montgomery, but totally his own. Also adept at the blues, Cartwright adds to the excitement.

Duck Warner handles the vocals on "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To" with swinging panache, especially when his mellow baritone swoops into the lower register. With a dramatic approach that conjures images of the great Earl Bostic, alto saxophonist Kim Park incites Cartwright to some of his best playing ever on the bluesy "September Song."

Among the other highlights here are Mike Metheny's passionate reading of "Angel Eyes" on flugelhorn, Ahmad Alaadeen's snaking soprano saxophone on the Victor Young tune "Delilah," and guitarist Danny Embrey tastefully stepping out on an uptempo version of "Without a Song." As always, Cartwright is a strong accompanist throughout these recordings, but he's also capable of absolutely brilliant solo passages, as on "Without a Song" and the 11-minute rendition of Johnny Mandel's "Emily," with Park switching to flute. Spaits contributes inspired solos on both tunes.

Given the depth and breadth of Kansas City's vibrant jazz scene, it is safe to say that we can expect more volumes of "The Best of Kansas City Jazz." And, as long as Cartwright is at the helm, they will continue to delight listeners.