

TAKING OFF

Cadence Magazine

I was initially put off by TAKING OFF (AK-BA-1040), the second group of poems that BARRY WALLENSTEIN has recorded (Beast IS, 5/78, p.22). A quartet of Jazz musicians comprised of Bill Chelf (p), Jeff Meyer (percl), Jeremy Steig (flt), and Charles Tyler (saxes) provide the accompaniment on the 25 selections (42:26). The music is as impressionistic as the poetry. The best way to approach a venture such as this one is to let the sound wash over you the first few times that you listen. Treat the 11 VOords as musical tones and do not glance at the word sheet that is included. Since the music is improvised, you are really in the same position that the musicians were when they went into the studio. After you finally allow the record to penetrate, you begin to pick out certain highlights, i.e., the raucous tenor sax on the opening cut, "Careful Bump," the bluesy flute of Steig on "Love Talk," the honky-tonk blues piano and clipped baritone sax introduction to "Do It Now" and the shimmering piano and flute opening of "Autumn Music." This project 111/Orks because Wallenstein is surrounded by musicians who listen and feel - they are sensitive to the emotions that the poet is portraying. Unlike Amiri Baraka (1 /80, p.80) or Jayne Cortez (9/80, p.29; 4/83, p.67) who are into political and social themes, Wallenstein deals with the politics of personal and interpersonal relationships. At times, this feels like a "cool school" recording, but it works well, and I recommend it.