

BARRY WALLENSTEIN.
IN CASE YOU MISSED IT,
@ SKY BLUE 106

Blues 1 & 2.1 Anger. Personal Plea. Tony Poems/ Androgyne. The Quiet Moment. And Now for The Music. They Say. A Lonely Tree/ The War; Two 14 Year Olds. Living The Life / Tears. Life of The Mole. Sleep. Peach Pie. Monkey Talk/Before and After/ In Case You Missed It. 58:20.

Wallenstein. voice. poetry; Arthur Blythe, as (1-4: 7, 8, 10, 11); John Hicks. p (1-4, 7, 8. 10. 11); Wilber Morris. b (1-4, 7, 8. 10, 11); John Fischer, p (5-6, 9); Mike Richmond, b (5- 6, 9). New York City, December 9 & 16, 1994.

Poet Barry Wallenstein cautions in a recent review article in *African American Review* that a 'Jazz poem is best when avoiding the "wistful or romantic" and sticking to the "layered or ambiguous." Certainly, Wallenstein's own "Jazz poetry" is layered, ambiguous, and highly interactive with the stellar cast of players he enlists for this recording. His comments trigger the comment's content from the players, whether tonally or as a directive ("John Hicks playing "Bill Evans" turns into an impressionistic set of phrases from the pianist). With a slightly raspy, taut delivery, Wallenstein runs well with the airy Arthur Blythe as well as with the bluesy, swinging bop-isms the saxophonist lays down.

Still a narrative poet above all, Wallenstein is an expert in-between-performer finding inspiration in the play of language aside from its relation to any kind of referentiality as well as in the recounting or sheer construction of experience and event. What's best about this session is the breadth of experience and depth of Jazziness, an ineffable quality that runs throughout these performances. What precise features of these poems that make them Jazz texts is left characteristically and nicely unclear throughout. Wallenstein isn't retelling tales of Sonny Rollins or any germinal Jazz players' trips through degeneration, ecstasy, or whatever. And the players aren't Jamming repetitive blues, ballads, or renditions of "Hot House." Tempos change: energies shift: and the swing goes outward as often as forward to some logical peak moment.

John Fischer and Mike Richmond seem to assume a less conventional role than that of Hicks, Blythe, and Morris, when the latter three sit out. Fischer wanders away from tonic centers more assertively, than Hicks, but does so in the absence of a horn to sing a line alongside Wallenstein's wry language. Indeed, Blythe makes a windy swirl often outside the parameters of convention and tone that complements both the language's downturning and Morris' nice alternation between thumping and bowing. There is a consistently unpredictable vibe to this disc which makes it compelling as poetry and as instrumental improvising.