

Teddy Edwards - Sunset Eyes (1959/1998)



1 *Tempo De Blues* 4:43 2 *Vintage '57* 7:09 3 *I Hear A Rhapsody* 3:29 4 *Up In Teddy's New Flat* 3:03 5 *Sunset Eyes* 5:24 6 *Teddy's Tune* 6:08 7 *Takin' Off* 6:30 8 *The New Symphony Sid* 2:12 9 *My Kinda Blues* 5:08 10 *Takin' Off (First Version)* 2:28 Bass – Ben Tucker (tracks: 1), Leroy Vinnegar (tracks: 2 to 10) Drums – Al Levitt (tracks: 1), Billy Higgins (tracks: 2 to 10) Piano – Amos Trice (tracks: 3, 8 to 10), Joe Castro (tracks: 2, 4 to 7), Ronnie Ball (tracks: 1) Tenor Saxophone – Teddy Edwards

Teddy Edwards, who took part in classic tenor battles with Dexter Gordon and Wardell Gray in Los Angeles during the mid- to late '40s, remained a major tenorman for more than half a century. However, his decision to live in L.A. resulted in him being greatly underrated through the years. Fortunately, the superior hard bop tenor (who showed that there was more than just cool jazz being played on the West Coast in the 1950s) recorded on a fairly frequent basis throughout his career. This set features music from 1959-1960 with Edwards joined by either Amos Trice, Joe Castro or Ronnie Ball on piano, Leroy Vinnegar or Ben Tucker on bass, and Billy Higgins or Al Levitt on drums. Edwards, an underrated composer, performs six of his originals (including his most famous composition, "Sunset Eyes," and two versions of "Takin' Off"), Vinnegar's "Vintage '57," and a pair of standards. Although there are short solos for Castro and Vinnegar, the focus throughout is on the leader's distinctive and likable tenor. Since the great Teddy Edwards never recorded an uninspiring record, this date is easily recommended to fans of straight-ahead jazz. ---Scott Yanow, AllMusic Review

There's little on veteran Los Angeles-based tenor saxophonist Teddy Edwards' date which sounds distinctively West Coast but here it is, part of a program of Pacific Jazz limited edition reissues in their West Coast Classics series from Capitol Records. All but one of the tracks

feature Leroy Vinnegar on bass and Billy Higgins on drums, the latter fresh from several sessions with Ornette Coleman and here playing as straight ahead as can be, the whole rhythm section swinging like mad, with either Amos Trice or mostly Joe Castro on piano. With Castro, this was a working group, with both live dates and session work. The program is mostly blues or bebop-flavored originals based on or close to the chord changes of “I’ve Got Rhythm,” with the title track — a Latin-flavored composition by the leader — a ballad standard, and Leroy Vinnegar’s “Vintage ‘57” thrown in for variety. The CD issue augments the LP original with the first and the three final tracks, with the opener another Edwards blues, this time with a different rhythm section: Ronnie Ball in piano, Ben Tucker on bass, and Al Levitt on drums.

Edwards is a wonderful and distinctive tenor player, with a smooth tone in the middle and lower register, a bit brassier in the upper, and a great sense of swing. His work is replete with melodic ideas, a gestural sense of variation in dynamics, and a lot of freedom with the beat — here relaxed and behind, there right on top of it or a little ahead. Pianists Trice and Castro both have that wonderful bebop-plus-barroom feel that I associate most with Sonny Clark. All three groups give the lie to the notion that music of the period from Los Angeles was necessarily “cool” or overly arranged. It’s just a pleasure to here these authoritative quartet performances from the middle of Teddy Edwards’ and Leroy Vinnegar’s long careers and the beginnings of Billy Higgins’. ---Larryy Koenigsberg, allaboutjazz.com

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