

Charles Davis & The Cedar Walton Trio - Blue Gardenia (2002)

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1. *A Beautiful Friendship* 2. *Texas Moon* 3. *Bossa Joe* 4. *Stranded* 5. *Shadow Of The Sunset* 6. *Sabia* 7. *Blues For Yahoo* 8. *Blue Gardenia* Charles Davis - Tenor and Baritone Saxophone Cedar Walton - Piano Peter Washington – Bass Joe Farnsworth - Drums

Baritone saxophonist Charles Davis started out with Sun Ra in the early 1950s. Along the way, he's paid his dues in the big bands of Clark Terry, Thad Jones/Mel Lewis, Illinois Jacquet and Lionel Hampton. He first played "Blue Gardenia" with Dinah Washington in the late '50s. As a leader, he's only issued a few recordings: *Dedicated To Tadd* (West 54, 1979), *Super 80* (Nilva, 1982), and *Reflections* (Red, 1990).

Now 70, Davis continues to exercise his instrumental voice as soloist; this time out he employs a 50-50 balance between baritone and tenor. The leader's solo saxophone voice stands sweet and melodic, but the session turns uneven in places due to a few slips of pitch control on baritone. Cedar Walton, Peter Washington and Joe Farnsworth do more than their share to make up for it with a hands-down rock-solid foundation for each piece.

On tenor, Davis sends a lovely melodic message that calls upon his vast experience for flavor. "Texas Moon" recalls time he's spent on the road with Hank Crawford, while "Blues for Yahoo" moves more in the hard bop direction of New York City. Yahoo is the producer's dog, who must have inherited Charlie Parker's up-tempo grit. Either that, or he simply reminded Davis of Bird's unique soul. *Blue Gardenia*, a solid straight-ahead album, swings with tradition and a true, blues-based spirit. ---Jim Santella, allaboutjazz.com

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