

Charles Tolliver - Connect (2020)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)
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1 *Blue Soul* 9:38 2 *Emperor March* 13:32 3 *Copasetic* 6:07 4 *Suspicion* 9:59 Alto Saxophone – Jesse Davis Bass – Buster Williams Drums – Lenny White Piano – Keith Brown Tenor Saxophone – Binker Golding (tracks: 3,4) Trumpet – Charles Tolliver

Put out more flags. *Connect*, the first release from trumpeter Charles Tolliver in over a decade, is a monster. From the Saturday-night goodtime opener "Blue Soul" through to the intense, Spanish tinged, serpentine closer "Suspicion," the album finds Tolliver still at the top of his game in a recording career which began in the mid 1960s. He fronts a US quintet which brings with it the grit and groove of a mid-1960s Blue Note hard-bop band while sounding totally 2020. The lineup is augmented on two of the four tracks by tenor saxophonist Binker Golding, one of the young lions of the new London jazz. It is a killer combination.

Tolliver's earliest appearances on record—on Jackie McLean's *It's Time* (Blue Note, 1964) and leading his own band on the Leroi Jones-curated live album *The New Wave In Jazz* (Impulse!, 1966)—positioned him as second-wave hard bop player and composer of exceptional talent. Notable follow-ups included McLean's *Action* (Blue Note, 1967), Horace Silver's *Serenade To A Soul Sister* (Blue Note, 1968) and Roy Ayers' *Stoned Soul Picnic* (Atlantic, 1968). After performing and recording with Gerald Wilson in Los Angeles for a year, Tolliver returned to his New York home-base at the request of Max Roach, with whom he worked for two pushing three years.

Tolliver made an immeasurable contribution to jazz when he co-founded the Strata-East label with pianist Stanley Cowell in 1971. Strata-East released almost sixty albums during the 1970s, when it was the primary platform for the intersection of hard bop and spiritual jazz.

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Tolliver is jazz royalty but, despite a string of fine albums on Strata-East, his catalogue is small when compared to those of some of his peers. He chooses his projects with care and his quality control is spot on. So the release of Connect, recorded in London in late 2019, is doubly welcome.

Alto saxophonist Jesse Davis, pianist Keith Brown, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Lenny White each get a share of the spotlight. Golding is in fast company but, with three landmark albums under his belt with Binker and Moses, has no need to prove anything to anyone; on both his solos he rises to the occasion with his customary rough-hewn elegance.

Everything, as the title of track one, side two has it, is copasetic. ---Chris May, allaboutjazz.com

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