

Kenny Garrett – Pushing The World Away (2013)

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01 – *A Side Order Of Hijiki* 02 – *Hey, Chick* 03 – *Chucho's Mambo* 04 – *Lincoln Center* 05 – *J'ouvert (Homage To Sonny Rollins)* 06 – *That's It* 07 – *I Say A Little Prayer* 08 – *Pushing The World Away* 09 – *Homma San* 10 – *Brother Brown* 11 – *Alpha Man* 12 – *Rotation*

Musicians: Kenny Garrett – alto saxophone (1-7, 9, 11-12), soprano saxophone (8), chant (8), piano (10), arranger, producer Benito Gonzalez – piano (1-3, 5-7, 9, 12) Corcoran Holt - bass (1-12) Marcus Baylor - drums (1-3, 5-6, 9, 12) Rudy Bird - percussion (3, 5-7, 9), cymbals and gong (8) Ravi Best - trumpet (3) Vernell Brown - piano (4, 8, 11-12), chant (8) McClenty Hunter - drums (4, 7, 10, 12), vocals (6) Mark Whitfield, Jr. - drums (8, 11-12) Jean Baylor - vocals (9) Carolin Pook - violin (10) Brian Sanders - cello (10) Jen Herman - viola (10)

On Kenny Garret's third album for Mack Avenue Records he explores many terrains. He uses two different pianists in Vernell Brown and Benito Gonzalez, bassist Corcoran Holt, drummers Marcus Baylor, McClenty Hunter, and Mark Whitfield, Jr., as well as a string quartet on "Brother Brown" (on which Garrett appropriately takes over on piano.) All but one of these 12 tunes offer sophisticated evidence of his own journey through the jazz lineage and his pushing at the margins of post-bop. There is a deep reliance on melody and singing through his horns, even when things get musically complex as they do on the title track in which he explores modal and Eastern musical terrains on his soprano. Quotes from Coltrane's "My Favorite Things" are in his solo, but so are moments of Eastern harmony, underscored by Brown's fat chords, wrangling arpeggios, and open-framed statements. There are also a pair of throaty vocal chants by him and the pianist -- his own Christian, the latter Buddhist -- commingling seamlessly to directly point at the spiritual nature inside the tune. Several other numbers offer overt nods to his forebears, collaborators, and influences. "Hey, Chick," with its Moorish-cum-flamenco vibe, evokes themes that Chick Corea explored potently on *My Spanish Heart*. "Chucho's Mambo," with its rumbero and son vibe, is a direct nod to pianist Chucho Valdes and also features trumpeter Ravi Best and percussionist Rudy Bird (in one of several appearances). "J'Ouvert" is subtitled "Homage to Sonny Rollins" and takes its cue from the saxophone colossus' use of calypso rhythms, cadences, and lyric themes. "A Side Order of Hijiki" doesn't refer to the Japanese culinary seaweed of its title, but the manner of his own playing as described by the late Mulgrew Miller. It is a driving post-bop jam, with sharp ostinatos by Gonzalez and a

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thrumming, furious bassline by Holt. A noticeable surprise is the inclusion of Burt Bacharach's and Hal David's "I Say a Little Prayer for You," with a subtle Latin framework that otherwise follows the arrangement written for Dionne Warwick. This is Garrett at his most songlike, and his most direct attempt on the album at communicating melodically; as in the past, it also reveals the deep, early influence of Junior Walker on his playing. Pushing the World Away is a wildly diverse offering for Garrett. What it doesn't reveal in swing it does in intricacies, shadows, impressive arrangements, and striking musicianship. ---Thom Jurek, Rovi

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