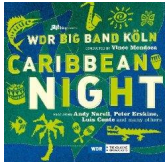


WDR Big Band Köln Feat. Vince Mendoza - Caribbean Night (1997)

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1. *Jenny's Room* (8:51) 2. *Pan Woman* (8:39) 3. *Babe Of The Day* (8:17) 4. *Shadow Play* (8:40) 5. *Groove Town* (8:11) 6. *Orange Guitars* (11:08) Vince Mendoza - conductor Andy Haderer, Rob Bruynen, Klaus Osterloh, Rick Kiefer, John Marshall - trumpets Dave Horler, Ludwig Nuss, Bernt Laukamp, Lucas Schmid - trombone, bass trombone Olivier Peters, Rolf Romer - tenor saxophones Jens Neufang - baritone saxophone Heiner Wiberny - alto saxophone Dario Eskenazi - keyboards Michel Alibo - bass Peter Erskine - drums Andy Narell - steel drums Ray Holman - steel drums Tom Miller - steel drums Alan Lightner - steel drums Luis Conte - percussion Marcio Doctor - percussion David Rudder - vocal (5)

This is an album of previously unreleased music of the WDR Big Band conducted by master composer/arranger/conductor Vince Mendoza, recorded back in 1997 (!) in the WDR studio in Cologne, with Andy Narell on steel drums and Peter Erskine on drums as the main guests.

The reason why it has taken so long for this wonderful music to be finally released after 13 years is unclear to me, as the quality of the music is out of discussion. In fact, the CD is worth purchasing for the first song alone, which is wrongfully credited in the booklet to calypso maestro David Rudder (who guests on the one disappointing album track Groovetown, which is written by himself and features his - to my ears - poor singing, fortunately the only vocal track on the album) instead of the real composer Andy Narell: the big band arrangement (by Tom Scott) of this extremely lyrical composition takes the subtle theme to a glorious euphoric climax with the brass and reeds full throttle and backed by the incomparable dynamic drumming of Peter Erskine (without a doubt the best big band drummer around). Andy Narell also contributes his delightful composition "Shadowplay" (originally featured on a Caribbean Jazz Project release with Dave Samuels and Paquito D'Rivera).

Vince Mendoza is featured with two compositions: a latinized/caribbeanized version of his

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unbelievable tune "Babe Of The Day" (originally featured as the opening song of his must-have album "Start Here" back in 1989) and "Orange Guitars" (originally featured on Jimmy Haslip's "ARC" album), which showcase Vince's very original tonality and his arranging qualities. Even though to my opinion the re-arranged "Babe Of The Day" is not entirely successful in its new tropical conception, it still provides for a dazzling performance by the entire big band and, again, of Peter Erskine, keeping the forward motion along with the song's shifting meters. The album comes highly recommended to lovers of big band music and is an essential purchase for Peter Erskine fans. --- Erik Werkman, amazon.com

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