

Rudresh Mahanthappa

Kinsmen

#128

★★★★

Mauger

The Beautiful Enabler

CLEAN FEED 114

★★★★

Rudresh Mahanthappa has a plangent, hard-edged alto saxophone sound, one that is made more searing by the hard-hitting, knotty themes that have been his stock in trade on his own recordings and those with his most empathetic collaborator, Vijay Iyer. If there is any criticism that could be leveled at the saxophonist's recordings to date, it is their emphasis on complexity, albeit in the service of an incisive cultural critique. These two recordings flesh out crucial aspects of Mahanthappa's sensibility, leaving one with a fuller picture of a musician on the threshold of major artist status.

Mahanthappa's compositions breathe more easily than usual in the company of such stellar Indian musicians as Kadri Gopalnath and A. Kanyakumari on *Kinsmen*. "Introspection" could be a Jackie McLean or Gary Bartz head, while the ballad section of "Longing" cuts to an emotional quick without ornamentation. Additionally, the grooves are equally accessible to the idioms of both traditions. "Snake!" smartly pivots from drummer Royal Hartigan's jazz-centric pulse, which launches a stinging statement by guitarist Rez Abassi, to a Poovalur Sriji-fueled rhythm on mridangam. In addition to sensitively taking the Carnatic musicians far afield of their tradition, Mahanthappa retools the convention of alap, the improvised introduction of a raga, resulting in pungent unaccompanied interludes by Abassi, Gopalnath, Kanyakumari and bassist Carlo de Rosa.

Bassist Mark Dresser and drummer Gerry Hemingway write demanding pieces, but they also pen tunes conducive to expansive, convivial blowing like the four they include on *The Beautiful Enabler*. With more than 30 years experience playing together in a multitude of settings, they are one of the more telepathic bass-drums tandems active today. But, far from

being the odd man out, Mahanthappa plays like he spent years in the shed with them. His "I'll See You When I Get There" benefits greatly from Dresser's furious arco and Hemingway's shadowing phrases and abrupt groundswells, while the plaint of "Intone" is constantly pulled by their undercurrents. Throughout the album, Mahanthappa sounds like he has at least a decade more experience than he actually does, a great measure of the energy and mutual support created on Mauger's sterling debut.

—Bill Shoemaker

Kinsmen: Introspection; Ganesh; Rez; Alap; Longing; Snake!; Carlo-Alap; Kalyani; Kadri-Alap; Kanya-Alap; Convergence (Kinsmen), (69:17)

Personnel: Rudresh Mahanthappa, Kadri Gopalnath, alto saxophone; A. Kanyakumari, violin; Rez Abassi, guitar; Poovalur Sriji, mridangam; Carlo de Rosa, bass; Royal Hartigan, drums.

» Ordering info: pirecordings.com

The Beautiful Enabler: Acuppa; Bearings; Flac; Intone; The Beautiful Enabler; I'll See You When I Get There; Meddle Music, (50:58)

Personnel: Mahanthappa, alto saxophone; Mark Dresser, bass; Gerry Hemingway, drums.

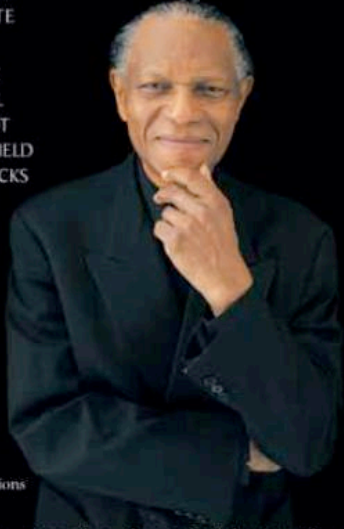
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