

THE NEW ORLEANS BRASS QUINTET: "MAKING ITS MARK!"
(Album Liner Notes authored by Producer, Antonio J. García in 1986)

Bob Amato founded 'The New Orleans Brass Quintet' in 1985, fielding a group eager to play music in the energetic, no-holds-barred manner he had sought for many years. ***"We enjoy taking musical risks, both in our choice of repertoire and in the dynamic manner we perform it."*** (Bob Amato – 1986)

For their first album, the NOBQ explores the music born in America, **JAZZ:** bebop, blues, New Orleans, contemporary, and standard tunes set in unique, original arrangements by writers who share the group's enthusiasm about the project and fine players. "I issued only one guideline: ***'Write from your own instinct, and leave your mark on the work!*** What I got in return was a freshness and a variety that blends as an excellent collection; the writers really set the tone of the album."

That freshness and variety are evident right at the start with the opening cut, ***Sweet Georgia Brown***. Talarico's writing easily flows from chorale to medium swing and up to a brisk stream of cascading and ascending lines, the chart providing an opportunity for each player to introduce himself briefly to us before it drives to the finish.

The seamless effect of Davis' ***Blue Rondo à la Turk*** arrangement poses a challenge well met by the NOBQ; the sassy trumpet solo is that of "Sweet Willie Singleton."

Willie offers his own composition, ***Boobis***, a lovely ballad captured in an attractive setting by Davis that serves as a solo vehicle for Singleton both in lush, gentle moods and breathtaking, double-time ***"breaks."***

Straight, No Chaser gets turned upside down and around by García's pen as the Quintet enters the realms of bebop and funk with the soli teamwork of Genevay and Tidwell, solos by Singleton and Gardner, and a powerful ensemble push led by Amato, spurred on by an exchange of ***"fours"*** and a final, five-octave ***"BANG!"***

Genevay's plunger-muted trombone takes center stage in ***St. James Infirmary***, a García arrangement that calls for the growling trumpet of Singleton and the piccolo trumpet of Amato as Bach meets the minor blues in the streets and alleys of old New Orleans.

And the honky-tonk and stride traditions are saluted in the toe-tapping tribute by arranger Beaney when Singleton's plunger and Amato's harmon lay into the tongue-in-cheek version of the New Orleans favorite, ***Royal Garden Blues***. Amato gets the first solo break, followed by a side-stepping dance from Genevay and Tidwell; then Singleton tears into the up-tempo solo spot -- the grooves feel so good, even the ***arrangement*** doesn't want to stop!

The flip side commences with Beaney's contemporary treatment of ***On Green Dolphin Street***, initially spotlighting Tidwell's tuba amid rhythmic and harmonic surprises; Amato and Gardner navigate a sea of winding, interwoven lines that are so unique to this arrangement.

Talarico charts course for an exotic journey with ***A Night In Tunisia***, summoning Amato for the opening cadenza, ensuing solo, and a spate of screaming trumpet work that continues right up to the piece's sensational conclusion. (Listen for Tidwell's powerful tuba on the bridge following Bob's solo!)

Gardner's introductory horn line provides the thematic palette for all the colors that follow in García's ethereal arrangement of the work made so famous by Nat Cole, ***Nature Boy***. Canonic exchanges, dramatic pauses, and converging, muted lines add to the somewhat disturbing mood of the piece, a mood sustained by the NOBQ's unified approach to pacing the performance.

One of bebop's most demanding "heads," ***Donna Lee***, gets a thorough inspection as arranger Paul Ferguson toys with each phrase in turn before proceeding to the next. Individual players contribute essential lines to the contrapuntal plot, ringing down the curtain with a blistering finale!

The jazz waltz ***Up Jumped Spring*** is charted uniquely in dual fluegel horn fashion by Davis (with Singleton leading, often shadowed by Amato). The unmistakably delightful swing feel detours enjoyably into royal concert hall-style flourishes before returning to the gentle waltz and an ending that arrives only at the performers' whim.

The album closes with a contrasting Davis version of ***Daahoud*** featuring Tidwell beneath a fabric of muted ostinato patterns. Singleton solos on the way through a powerful performance that creates tension and excitement, releasing only with the explosive, biting clash in the final moments.

The unique relationship that stems from the successful pairing of ensemble and arranger is aptly demonstrated in the hearing of this NOBQ debut. (***Digital technology captures the Quintet with a representation so accurate that even the gentle flow of air in historic Longue Vue Gardens Playhouse cannot escape detection the more quiet passages!***) Writers' inspiration and performers' enthusiasm are intensely focused toward the common goal of expression, benefitting the listener and creator alike.

Future projects are in planning; look for The New Orleans Brass Quintet as it beings to make its mark on the musical horizons ahead!