



MURPHY / CARN: *Try Again. Glassman.* Second Act. Murphy!* DAVIDSON: *Family Portrait. Murphy's Law. Reason, Season, Lifetime. Colebourn* / Carn-Davidson 9: Jason Logue, Kevin Turcotte, *tpt*; William Carn, *tb*; Alex Duncan, *bs-tb*; Tara Davidson, *a-sax/s-sax*; Kelly Jefferson, *t-sax*; Perry White, *bar-sax*; Andrew Downing, *bs*; Ernesto Cervini, *dm*; *Emilie Claire-Barlow, *voc* / no label name; CD9-002 (available soon on CD Baby & iTunes)

The Carn-Davidson 9, formed in 2010, consists of husband-and-wife team William Carn and Tara Davidson with seven of their colleagues. Judging from this, their sophomore release dedicated to the couple's 20-pound Russian Blue cat Murphy, they are an excellent jazz band in the modern sense, meaning that they follow the prescribed methods of orchestration and write songs with amorphous tempi and melodies.

This is not to take anything away from their creativity, only to point out that many modern bands fall into similar patterns. The Carn-Davidson group has a few tricks up its sleeve, however, such as the fugue in the middle of *Try Again*, the first piece on the CD, and the *accelerando* towards the end. Tara Davidson's *Family Portrait*, which follows, is a nice ballad-type piece with certain Bill Evans and Monk-

ish overtones, scored for trombone and winds with the trumpet adding interjections near the beginning. The beat is irregular but not amorphic, sounding to me as if it is in 2 ½/4 (or maybe 5/8, if you want to split hairs about it). The band coasts along very nicely at this tempo, feeling quite comfortable in its quirkiness, and Carn's trombone solo, the first one up, is nicely reflective, finding interstices in the music and filling them in.

Glassman begins with bowed bass and Emilie-Claire Barlow humming along with the soprano sax, an interesting effect. As the music progresses one notes a greater delicacy in the scoring, written on this occasion by Geoff Young, which has a feel similar to that achieved in the late 1930s-early '40s by such arrangers as Alec Wilder and Paul Laval. Kevin Turcotte's trumpet solo changes the mood with its high-flying, rapid figures, but eventually the music itself becomes busier, with Barlow's voice heard above the fray during the ride-out. Ernesto Cervini also has a terrific drum solo in this one.

Murphy's Law is a truly interesting and intriguing piece by Davidson, one of those jazz-classical hybrids that utilize jazz themes and harmonies in classical form. Within its unusual time divisions of the basic tempo, one hears a splendid baritone solo by Perry White ("And don't call me chief!" he would yell at Jimmy Olsen), having long since relinquished his position as editor of *The Daily Planet*. (Yes, it's just a joke.) The two trumpets play a full chorus scored in close harmony, then revert to rhythmic figures as the reeds and trombone play the tune; more variants by the trumpets, then suddenly over and out.

Second Act is another meditative piece, equally influenced by classical form (and including solos that sound interwoven into the fabric of the ongoing musical development) if less stunning than the previous two pieces. The promo sheet accompanying this CD claims that the music "imparts the feeling of a march," but I felt it as much slower than a march, and the general mood of the piece as reflective in a way that keeps the mind in one place. The insertion of against-the-beat triplets near the end was a nice touch, Davidson wrote *Reason, Season, Lifetime* as a taking-stock piece of current and old friendships in her life; it's a nice upbeat piece, taken at a *Christopher Columbus*-type tempo if rather more unusual in metric division. Lead trumpeter Jason Logue wrote the fine arrangement and Kelly Jefferson plays the tenor sax in a fairly high range, filling in space between the phrases. Davidson's soprano solo is sparse at first, later quite busy with rolling triplets, high-range excursions and a few Bechet-type growls.

Colebourne, written as a lullaby for Davidson's newborn nephew, nonetheless picks up a bit of momentum via the bass line, which is doubled by the composer on soprano sax and complemented by White on baritone. This one plays around with the ensemble for some time before Davidson solos on alto and Turcotte on trumpet. It ends, oddly, on an unresolved chord. The finale, another song dedicated to their cat (*Murphy!*), is influenced by rock music, but although I normally have an absolute aversion to most fusion and rock music, I found this piece creative and interesting. The fast opening tempo relaxes considerably after the introduction, and the amorphous melody is tossed around the band as various counter-figures are introduced. It's the kind of "rock"-influenced pieces that put me in mind of such late 1960s/early '70s bands as Chicago, The Electric Flag, Blood Sweat & Tears and the various Al Kooper groups (does anyone out there besides me remember Al Kooper?). The ever-shifting tempi continue and the music ebbs and flows; there is a passage where the music is electronically distorted (I could have lived without that), and Cervini's drums also seem to be electronically enhanced by echo effects, but by and large this is good music.

All in all, then, a highly impressive album by a band that definitely deserves wider recognition/

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