



Bill Allred's Classic Jazz Band, 2 The Max, Sun Jazz Records; 17 Selections, TT =

Bill Allred's eight-piece little big band has gone into a recording studio nine times previously and has hit a home run on each occasion. The band's 10th and latest recording session produced the same results: a four-bagger.

The principal differences between *2 The Max* and earlier discs is that the band takes on guitarist Paul Scavardo on seven of the ten tracks to boost the head count to nine and Terry Myers, primarily a clarinet, tenor sax and flute player, emerges as a gifted bari sax artist as well. It also should be noted that piano chores are shared by Billy Hunter, Randy Morris and Jeff Phillips.

But regardless of who's playing what on which track, the octet-nonet delivers a disciplined, cohesive performance bursting with energy. Add superb soloists in every



by Cam Miller

chair to sparkling charts by a variety of arrangers – Scott Whitfield, Dave McKenzie, Matty Matlock, band trombonist John Allred, et al – and you have the complete package.

Just how complete is reflected right out of the box – “Royal Garden Blues,” renamed “Matty’s Royal Garden Blues” since it’s a Matty Matlock chart pared down in size. The number serves to introduce members of the ensemble and swings like crazy in the process.

That which follows is just as appealing. A modified version of Tommy Dorsey’s take of “Song Of India” with the trombone tandem of leader Bill Allred and son John in the foreground; a roaring “Jumping At The Woodside” with Myers’ bari sax a prominent voice; a delightful “New Orleans” featuring Bobby Pickwood’s vocal and Charlie Bertini’s fine flugelhorn work, and a J. Allred chart of “Blue Skies.”

an album highlight that features both Allreds.

Ah, but there’s more, much more. Items like a sky of another hue, Ray Noble’s foot-warming “Skyliner,” notable for solos by the brass blowers; “You Took Advantage Of Me” spotlighting bassist Jay Mueller and Hunter; “Davenport Blues” that demonstrates Scavardo’s prowess as a guitarist and two numbers out of the Basie ‘60s bag – a relaxed “Late Date” and a rockin’ “The Kid From Burbank (Redbank)” that puts Morris front and center.

And for those who prefer their music on the mellow side, “Singin’ The Blues” hits the spot, featuring, as it does Pickwood’s mellow trumpet solo and Scavardo’s equally soft-as-silk guitar solo.

A striking performance of “America The Beautiful” brings the session to a fitting close.