

# Blues By 5

## OffBeat

June 2000

In a remarkably short period of time, this young quintet has established itself as one of the most unique and consistently compelling modern jazz units in New Orleans. Far from slipping into a sophomore slump, this second release shows that they've skipped to the head of the class and graduated early.

**Blues By 5**, like their debut record, contains all originals contributed in turn by each band member, but these ten new tunes exhibit a higher level of skill, profundity and grooving intensity. The wonderfully raw, hungry quality that permeated the first record is tempered by a new degree of maturity and poise, allowing them to more gracefully explore the wide range of styles and ideas that is their passion.

This record also provides a showcase for their current lineup, since trumpeter Mark Rapp left last fall for New York and has been replaced by guitarist Brian Seeger (who was already affiliated with the group as a producer and frequent guest player). The group's texture is greatly enhanced by Seeger's rich and versatile guitar sound, especially when he doubles up with Brent Roses' sax on blistering melodic lines.

The artistic centerpiece here is the stunning 15 minute exploration "India," written by drummer Mark DiFlorio. A slow, extended drum solo with primordial undertones gradually becomes more intricate and segues into a dreamy, abstract melodic section with piano, flute and an eerie, slack-key sounding guitar. Spacey synth-organ effects (ed: actually a guitar!) compliment a prayer-like arco bass feature by Brady Kish, then the song shifts into a more aggressive swing section with burning improvisations from guitar, sax and drums - this time DiFlorio goes in the other direction, from complex to primitive-and the song resolves with a restatement of the dreamy, abstract section.

"Saga, not raga" – that's how Tim Green, who produced this record (also a prominent local sax veteran), describes "India" in his superb "free association" liner notes. The track is lush and cinematic in scope, effectively evoking a journey through a mysterious world, and it offers a glimpse into the wild excursions this band is capable of embarking on in live settings.

Many of the other tunes are more groove oriented, such as the funky opener "Reality Check" and "Jacanabac," featuring soulful work on the B-3 organ by keyboardist Charlie Dennard. Dennard also plays B-3 on "Leap Year Stomp," a romping street parade tune with a second line groove (complete with tambourine for Mardi Gras Indian feel) reminiscent of Memphis soul and early instrumental Meters. The title track swings sublimely in 5/4 time with a loping shuffle groove similar to Brubeck's "Take Five," while Dennard's bluesy work on acoustic piano at times suggests Les McCann. The hidden last track, "African Violets," is a short, poignant closer, another gem from the pen of DiFlorio.

**Clearly, Quintology is determined to achieve greatness. "Blues By 5" suggests that they are destined for it.**

– Jonathan Tabak

## All About Jazz.com

July 2000

([www.allaboutjazz.com/REVIEWS/r0700\\_120.HTM](http://www.allaboutjazz.com/REVIEWS/r0700_120.HTM))

Jazz, like cooking, is all about taste and timing. And the time for the New Orleans group Quintology is now. On their second CD release, Quintology (an actual band, not just a hastily assembled collection of solo players!) blends its five distinct musical ingredients into a rich, satisfying gumbo of modern jazz, with a side dish of spicy soul.

The set of all-original, mostly straightahead material features compositions by all five band members, including four from drummer Mark DiFlorio. The opener, "Reality Check," is a funky, groove-based jam in the Jimmy Smith vein, courtesy of Brent Rose. "Tears In My Vino," also from saxophonist Rose, is a no-holds-barred burner, and a showcase for Rose and guitarist Brian Seeger. The album's centerpiece is DiFlorio's 15-minute epic "India," which opens with almost four minutes of quiet, meditative solo drumming before the rest of the band joins in. With its Eastern theme and complex structure, it's a bit of a departure from the rest of the album, but proof that these guys can play more than just head, solo, head. The band quickly jumps back into the soul-jazz bag for Seeger's "Jacanabac" and bassist Brady Kish's "Leap Year Stomp."

***This is fresh, exciting music that proves there's still plenty of young talent brewing in the cradle of jazz.***

– Joel Roberts

## JazzUSA.com

July 2000

([www.jazzusa.com/stories/shorttakes0700.cfm](http://www.jazzusa.com/stories/shorttakes0700.cfm))

One listen and you'll know: the 'Sixties sound is alive. Here's a sassy organ, blustery sax from Brent Rose, and guitar with a taste of Grant Green. The tune's called "Reality Check," and you'll need one; they don't sound like a New Orleans band, but New York in the good old days. It gets stronger on "Blues By 5": Charlie Dennard, now on piano, stabs a tough 5/4 rhythm. The stew simmers a while, then enters Rose: an angular strut, then shouts like Coltrane. Ferocious, and then Brian Seeger comes twanging, with a vengeance. **Yes, indeed – this album has power.**

A lot of versatility here – they coo as well as they scream, and emotions change fast. (In a way they remind me of Astral Project, another group from New Orleans.) There's the pungent bop of "Tears In My Vino," (Seeger is great in his delicacy) a quiet fog on "India." This isn't Trane's tune, but a long solo for Mark DiFlorio, his cymbals creep, and then comes a procession of tom-toms. Three minutes of this and the others wander in; it's what a dream sounds like. "Jacanabac" goes back to the organ; it's a smoky tune worthy of McDuff. Seeger is strong, DiFlorio active- Dennard is boss. "Tune 2" uses Monk harmony to great effect, and keep listening when "Leap Year Stomp" ends. A minute of silence, then Brady Kish starts walking the bass. A theme develops, everyone adds to it, and then it's gone- a little bit of mystery to end the disc. Considering the other moods we've heard, it makes our listen complete.

– John Barrett