

## Bob Rockwell Quartet featuring Ben Sidran **BOB's BEN - A Salute To Ben Webster**

Tenor saxophonist Ben Webster was a large man in every way. Physically, he was tall and heavysset. His playing was rich in timbre; his sound was enormous, but full of air as well. Before his death in 1973, Webster lived in Denmark for several years. His presence and his work with Danish musicians had enormous influence on the Danish jazz scene.

60 year old tenor saxophonist Bob Rockwell has also made his home in Denmark. His re-discovery of Webster led to BOB's BEN – a deeply felt, warm tribute to the old master.

Bob Rockwell's previous release, BOB'S WILDER, was quite a sensation. It earned him first place in Jazz Special's annual reader's poll, as well as the equivalent poll among the magazine's critics and writers – the first time ever that readers and reviewers have been in agreement in the magazine's poll. This fact illustrates the scope of Bob Rockwell's art: he enjoys a wide popularity among jazz audiences as well as the respect of the critics. Rockwell's intelligent, spellbinding and passionate playing has made him one of the most loved and popular musicians on the Danish jazz scene.

Bob Rockwell began performing at an early age with organ trios and touring groups, which landed him in show orchestras in Las Vegas for a spell. In the mid-70s he moved to New York where his activities included a seat in the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra and steady gigs with Tito Puente, Freddie Hubbard and Ben Sidran. In 1983 he settled permanently in Denmark, where he has been a highly appreciated sideman for the past 22 years. Some of his Danish work includes the Danish Radio Big Band, Ernie Wilkins Almost Big Band, Jan Kaspersen, The Organizers, The Repertory Quartet and an abundance of recordings. While working as a sideman, he has also led his own groups, and recorded several albums for Steeple Chase. Bob Rockwell now records for Stunt, the label on which his award-winning BOB'S WILDER was released. He has toured all over Europe, Japan, and the U.S. as a soloist and as a member of Ben Sidran's quartet.

BOB'S BEN is destined to cause at least as much attention as BOB'S WILDER. Never has Rockwell played better, with more absorption or greater composure. He has drawn his inspiration from Webster without imitating him. The American pianist Ben Sidran produced the CD, and he tells us that prior to recording, Rockwell listened to all the classic Webster recordings from his Ellington period via the Verve albums to his last European releases. He chose his favorites, and sought as much information on Webster as possible from the Danish musicians who worked with him during his years in Denmark. All the tunes are recorded in Ben's original keys and tempi, and use the same chord substitutes. At the sessions the musicians set up in a close circle, recording without headsets. "And when we were finished, we mixed the album just like they did back then: drums to the right, piano to the left, sax and bass in the middle." However, it is the form alone that is borrowed from Webster – the musicians are all unmistakably themselves.

Working with Bob Rockwell on the album are Ben Sidran, an extremely popular pianist, vocalist and international bandleader in his own right, bassist Billy Peterson (whose work includes Lou Tabakin, Mose Allison, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Eddie Harris and Lee Konitz) and drummer Leo Sidran. BOB'S BEN was recorded in U.S.A. and released by the international Danish label Stunt. The release was supported financially by the Copenhagen based Ben Webster Foundation.

BOB'S BEN is a great tribute to Ben Webster; it is a great saxophone record and mood album – but more than anything else, it is a great Bob Rockwell album.

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