

Charles Ruggiero As Heard On TV

RONDETTE 1014

★★★★½

From Bob James to Quincy Jones, great jazz melodists have paid the rent with TV themes for decades. But a full set of TV show themes as the launching point for a modern jazz record? That's a completely different game.

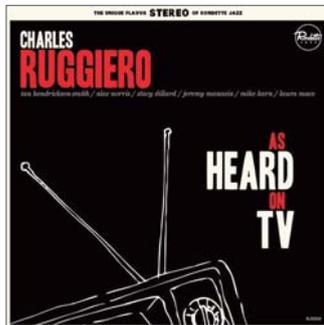
But drummer Charles Ruggiero seems to have had fun putting together a DVR's worth of melodies that would satisfy any couch potato. The result is a bizarre universe where every TV theme sounds like it was recorded in Rudy Van Gelder's New Jersey studio circa 1965.

"Bewitched" bounces on Ruggiero's nimble brushes with a muted Alex Norris on trumpet dancing throughout. A soul-jazz rendition of the "Law & Order" theme is laugh-out-loud funny when soprano saxophonist Stacy Dillard gives off a siren-like wail mid-solo. And the "Game Of Thrones" theme is drenched in the aquatic modalism of Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage," serving as a "listen to this" kind of moment to share with non-jazz fans. For purists, this may be a polarizing record, but it has the potential to lure those drawn by the familiar to explore a full set of well-executed small combo jazz. A noble goal. —Sean J. O'Connell

As Heard On TV: Bewitched; Law & Order; Moonlighting; The Bugs Bunny Show; Game Of Thrones; iCarly; Good Times; The Honeymooners. (42:36)

Personnel: Charles Ruggiero, drums; Jeremy Manasia, piano; Mike Kam, bass; Ian Hendrickson-Smith, flute (1), alto saxophone (5, 6, 7); Alex Norris, trumpet (1, 6); Stacy Dillard, soprano saxophone (2), tenor saxophone (8); Laura Mace, vocals (6).

Ordering info: rondettejazz.com



No BS! Brass Band Brass Knuckles

SELF RELEASE

★★★★½

In music, very little matches the combined energy of the relentless rhythms of a drum corps and the solid funk of New Orleans-style brass band. But when you add that to the hitting cadences of rap and hip-hop, it can be exhilarating and exciting.

That's why the name of this band and the title of this record is most appropriate. The No BS! Brass Band—based in Richmond, Virginia—plays all of these 11 tracks with power and conviction.

The talented ensemble was assembled by founders Reggie Pace (trombone) and Lance Koehler (drums), and nearly every member of the group has had conservatory training. Their eclectic musical style draws on elements from a vast range of artists, including James Brown, John Coltrane, Michael Jackson and Led Zeppelin, but their signature sound is completely original.

The music steps hard like the best high school and college marching bands. It is immediate and fresh, jumping right out of the speakers.

—David Kunian

Brass Knuckles: 3 AM Bounce; Act Like You Know; The F.O.O.L.; Tyrannis; Brass Knuckles; Out Of Time; What Now; Get Slow; Nailbiter; Trifling Woe; I40W. (43:03)

Personnel: Lance Koehler, drums, vocals; Stefan Demetriadis, contra; Reggie Chapman, Dillard Watt, bass trombone; John Hulley, trombone; Bryan Hooten, trombone, vocals; Reggie Pace, trombone; David Hood, alto saxophone; Sam Hoff, Taylor Barnett, trumpet; Marcus Tenney, trumpet, vocals; Rob Quallich, lead trumpet.

Ordering info: nobsbrass.com



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