

The Reviews are In on AJO's CD: American Agonistes: Music in Time of War

American Agonistes: Music in Time of War (Leo Records)

"Beautiful, poignant and raucous. . . This album drips with honesty, intelligence, sound design, and art." Francois Couture, Billboard.com

"Truly impressive. . . a hit recording." Altrisuoni [Italy]

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"Showcase[s] the limitless range that a big band allows in compositional freedom, breadth of sonic palette and electricity in a live environment."

Elliott Simon, AllAboutJazz New York

Read the complete review by Simon: Versatile Big Bands: American Agonistes and Worth the Wait

About the Recordings:

From the greek word agon, to struggle, the music probes the ongoing struggle for the soul of American democracy. All compositions are by Aardvark founder and music director, Mark Harvey.

Track Descriptions:

- American Agonistes contains some of the band's most evocative work to date. A commemorative of the 9/11 tragedy "Blood on the Sun/New Moon Rising" was recorded in performance just days after that event.
- Fallen Truth: A Tone Parallel to the Politics of Deception surveys the current political landscape with movements such as One Thing and Another, based on sixteen words in the State of the Union Address that abetted the invasion of Iraq. Big Oil Tango, The Prevaricator, and Theocracy in America need no explanation but offer much musical food for thought.
- Completing the triptych of works on the recording is Sounding Peace, an affirmative depth sounding of the waters toward possible resolution of conflict on many levels.

Sound clips, courtesy of the Jazz Loft (jazzloft.com) Blood on the Sun New Moon Rising

From JazzLoft.com:

This is the fifth CD by The Aardvark Jazz Orchestra on Leo Records and tenth CD overall. American Agonistes is a testimony to the fact that the Aardvark Jazz Orchestra goes from strength to strength. The conductor and composer Mark Harvey writes: "Agonistes comes from the Greek word 'agon' and conveys a sense of contest, struggle, even painful experience. American Agonistes is about the struggle for the soul of our constitutional democracy amid world tension and conflict; and it stands within the long tradition of music addressing larger social and political issues".

ARTISTS

Aardvark Jazz Orchestra: Mark Harvey (piano, trumpet); Peter Bloom, Arni Cheatham, Mark Messier, Phil Scarff, Chris Rakowski, Daniel Ian Smith, Dan Zupan (saxophones, woodwinds); KC Dunbar, Taylor Ho Bynum, Jeanne Snodgrass (trumpets); Dan Shaud (French Horn); Jay Keyser, Bill Lowe, Jeff Marsanskis, Bob Pilkington, Tom Pisek (Trombones, Tuba); Larry Carsman, Richard Nelson (guitar); John Funkhouser, Jesse Williams (string bass); Jerry Edwards (electric bass); Harry Wellott (drums); Craig Ellis (percussion); Donna Hewitt Didham (vocals on 1 cut)

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