



TAEKO

Voice

FLAT NINE RECORDS

Born in Japan, yet assimilating American Jazz and singing it with few indications of her origin, Taeko brings a variety of influences into a varied musical program for what is her second recording, "Voice" (Flat Nine Records).

She is backed by a group led by co-producer, drummer Doug Richardson (he also is heard on melodica) with Greg Lewis on organ, Lou Rainone on piano, Kevin McNeal on guitar and Gaku Takanashi on bass and wah wah guitar. It's a band that can lay down some funk as well as dreamy romanticism.

Opening up is a vocal adaptation of Herbie Hancock's "Cantaloupe Island (Get Up)," as Taeko hiply delivers Juanita Flemming's lyrics against the familiar music, followed by her singing and scatting the Jon Hendricks lyrics for the Monk-Hawkins collaboration, "I Mean You (You Know Who)." "Soochow Serenade" was a 1940's hit in Japan and she delivers the Japanese in a lovely fashion with Rainone's effective, spare piano.

She whispers and cajoles the meaning out of Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues" in an understated manner. I should not imply she is a sultry singer, because she can belt out a lyric and moan, or scat like a Rex Stewart trumpet solo with all sorts of half valve effects.

She scats and trumpets out the lyrics of "A Clear Day" before a swinging, rolling piano solo, followed by her original, "Spring Nocturne," where she goes from a whisper to an all out delivery, followed by her cooing of the Doug Carn lyrics to the Brazilian samba tinged Wayne Shorter composition, "Infant Eyes," as she entreats the one with infant eyes "To make your dreams come true," with a lovely guitar solo.

"Biwako," a folk song about Japan's largest lake and her hometown, is heard in both Japanese and English renditions and is handled with a mid-tempo backing with Richardson taking a melodica solo. Greg Lewis' organ sets the tune for Ted Daryll's lyrics to Stanley Turrentine's "Sugar" (with its refrain, "he's sugar to me"), followed by an Ellington indigo ballad, "I Didn't Know About You," accompanied by McNeal's lovely guitar. "Stand" showcases her ability to provide a jazzy interpretation to the Sly Stone soul funk classic with her horn like scatting.

An intriguing recording by a vocalist who displays considerable vocal range as well as her choice of material.

Ron Weinstock



JIMMY DAWKINS

Presents The Leric Story

DELMARK

Leric Records was an independent blues label operated by bluesman Jimmy Dawkins in the 1980's. During its relatively brief existence, it issued a number of 45-rpm singles by lesser-known members of the Chicago blues community, including some still active today. Dawkins produced or purchased for release the sides issued on Leric, playing on some of the sessions, but mostly making available some interesting music. Delmark has just issued "Jimmy Dawkins Presents: The Leric Story" with 16 selections, including several previously unissued selections.

Little Johnny Christian opens this collection up with a driving "New Life," with the band including Michael Coleman on guitar and Eddie 'Jewtown' Burks on harmonica with a terrific tagline "Why every man gotta have two women, and a good woman only needs one man." Outside of the functional, unimaginative horn arrangements, there is some nicer playing including fine vocal and guitar. Dawkins' penned "Luv Somebody," has a strong chugging groove that would be at home on a Johnny Taylor Recording with Vance Kelly taking the lead guitar. The two other Christian performances give further evidence of what a fine singer he was and also were the first session for guitarist Chico Banks. "Ain't Gonna Worry About Tomorrow," which uses the "Cummins Prison Farm Blues," melody is an impressive performance with strong singing and terrific playing from Banks.

Dawkins' recognizable guitar is present on the sides by the late bassist-vocalist Queen Sylvia Embry (including the excellent "I Know I Ain't Number One") and the early sides by Nora Jean (Bruso) whose sides show more promise that has been realized on her recent recordings, including an excellent disc on Severn. Dawkins' also supports a fine performance from bassist Robert 'Big Mojo' Elem who once anchored the bands of Freddie King and Luther Allison. His side was previously unissued as were the three sides (one an instrumental) by singer-guitarist Vance Kelly who is still active. "Use What You Got," is a mix of soulful singing and a down home blues groove. Tail Dragger is represented by two sides with a solid band but I find his Howlin' Wolf styled performances over-bearing and suffer from his mumbling diction, but others will disagree. Sister Margo and Healing Center Choir close this compilation with two solid gospel performances.