

Review of the Dave Wilson Quartet CD *There Was Never*

An adventurous improviser, Dave Wilson has his own sounds and styles on tenor and soprano. On *There Was Never*, his fourth recording as a leader, he teams up with a high quality rhythm section that worked regularly with Dave Liebman: pianist Bobby Avey, bassist Tony Marino, and drummer Alex Ritz. All four of these musicians know how to play inside (swinging like a hard bop group) and outside (improvising freely), and sometimes both at the same time.

On *There Was Never* which was released by the Zoho label, the quartet performs six Wilson originals, "Summertime," and a pair of pop tunes that they turn into modern jazz explorations. The program begins with "The Time Has Come," a high-energy piece that features Wilson's tenor at its stormiest, an assertive rhythm section, and an energetic and rhythmically complex statement from Avey. "Cassidy" (originally played by the Grateful Dead) is a contrast, featuring Wilson's soprano on a soulful and gospellish number that is a bit funky and quite celebratory. The leader also plays soprano on Brian Wilson's "God Only Knows," caressing the melody during a thoughtful performance.

"There Was Never" shifts its rhythms between straight ahead, funk, and mambo while Wilson and Avey take solos that become quite intense. "Smooth Sailing," which can be thought of as a free calypso, and "Master Plan" have consistently heated and passionate solos. "Feeling Peaceful" is relatively mellow compared to those numbers before "Summertime" is taken for quite a ride, evolving through several different rhythmic grooves and ranging from melodic to going fully outside. The closer, "On The Prairie," is a free improvisation with Wilson on soprano and also covers a few different moods.

Throughout *There Was Never*, Dave Wilson and Bobby Avey take consistently inventive solos that are full of energy and fearlessness yet also contain subtlety and some mood changes. Tony Marino and Alex Ritz, while in supportive roles, push and inspire the lead voices and keep the energy level high and the momentum flowing. The result is an invigorating session of go-for-broke jazz, connected to the tradition while pushing the music forward.

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