

**TOM VARNER**  
**Long Night Big Day**

**New World Records 80410**

When it came time to prepare for this recording I was intrigued by the possibilities of a quintet consisting of three winds, bass, and drums. My earlier projects had been either in the trio, quartet, or traditional jazz quintet format-now I wanted to write for a group that could play expressive chamber music, swing hard, and improvise on a high level. As envisioned, the compositions would combine inspiration from numerous sources to create something relevant to the present, reflecting today's complexity without attempting a re-creation of a specific singular style from the past. Most important, I wanted to reflect on music with a personal connection: Ornette Coleman's joy; Art Blakey's power; Alban Berg's brooding romanticism; Erik Satie's lonely humor; and Steve Lacy's angular warm intelligence-as well as a variety of music of composers and bandleaders with whom I've been personally involved in recent years, such as John Zorn, Bobby Previte, and LaMonte Young.

Because of this wide range of influences, I needed an ensemble that could jump with ease among different musical worlds. Ed Jackson played on my first two recordings, and has worked with Roy Haynes, Ran Blake, and the Fatback Band. Rich Rothenberg, besides being a busy New York City free-lancer, plays with Ed Jackson, Bobby Watson, and Jim Hartog in the 29th St. Saxophone Quartet. Lindsey Horner is very active in the New York scene, having worked recently with Muhal Richard Abrams, Marty Ehrlich, Tim Berne, Bobby Previte, and Myra Melford, as well as with his own group. His debut recording as a leader is on the Open Minds label. Phil Haynes' own recordings have been released on the Owl and Open Minds labels, and he performs and records with his cooperative group Joint Venture, as well as with trumpeter Paul Smoker's trio. All of the musicians on this recording are active composers in their own right.

"Big Day" is an unusually structured composition: A-B-C-B-C-D-D 1 -improvisation-B-C-B-C- coda. The C section has (for us wind players) a tortured, "intervallically illogical" logic. The D section that flows into the improvisations aims for a "multivoiced transcendence," in which the overall sound takes precedence over any individual soloist.

"Search for Sanity" also deals with unusual structures, with the two saxophones playing off against the French horn. After a long introduction of a repetitive 16th-note pattern with variations, the tune itself (A-B-C-D) mixes a rather quirky and angular 3/4 feel with a 4/4 feel in the short C section (during which Ed solos each time). With solos by myself, Rich, and Lindsey, all three horns then solo together over one cycle before the last time out.

"Wind Trio+" is actually for two wind trios and percussion. It was first played in Switzerland by the group Cadavre Exquis, co-led by composers Urs Blochinger and Christoph Baumann. The form is A-improvisation-B-improvisation-A. The drums and second wind trio play only during the B section. Here, Phil improvises over the two independently cued trios, with an Ives-like result. Most of the melodic material derives from the twelve-tone row that Rich states at the very beginning of the piece.

"Prince of Jamaica (Queens)" is derived from a collection of phrases composed directly from the French horn and put together as a vehicle for Ed Jackson. The structure is arch-like-A-B-C1-C2-D-E-F-E-C2-C1-B-A-with the solo over D-E-F-E. Toward the end of the E section, Rich and I play in 5/4

over Phil's 4/4. Then the three winds trade two-bar statements with the drums before the final head out.

One of the earlier working titles for this recording was "Search of the Cocoon Shredders," a tribute and encouragement to those who fight the cocoon-like complacency of their lives in striving to realize their full potential. "March for the Cocoon Shredders" is about the same issue. Inspired by Satie's "Three Next-to-Last Thoughts," I was also drawn to the sound of bass trombonist Dave Taylor, who premiered this piece with Urs Blochinger and myself at a very surreal masked ball birthday party outside Berne, Switzerland.

"Arts and Leisure" deals with fast cuts between two stylistic worlds, thus changing our perception of both of them. After a tenor and drum introduction, the entire piece alternates between sections of twelve-bar blues and twelve-tone rows.

"Prayer for Deliverance" is a miniature concerto for Lindsey Horner—a short sketch that can be played differently each time. It concerns finding the strength and grace to transform self-hatred into self-love. Beginning with an adapted traditional hymn ("There Is a Fountain"), it veers off to a series of colors over which the bassist solos, concluding on a drone in C.

"Cabin in the Future" is based on the intriguing harmonic structure of Harold Arlen's standard, "Cabin in the Sky." In the saxophone shout chorus toward the end I experimented with extreme highs and lows, aiming for a surreal and humorous dreamlike quality.

"Long Night" is a journey. Though all in the same tempo, each of the three sections is deceptively different from the other. In the third section I sought to contrast the alto saxophone soaring over the set melodic patterns of the French horn and tenor saxophone, with all three winds playing over the furiously swinging bass and drums—an attempt to capture that beautiful and horrible swirl we call life.

—Tom Varner

**Tom Varner** is a graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music. He has performed and recorded extensively both with his own ensembles and with artists as diverse as John Zorn, LaMonte Young, Bobby Previte, Dave Liebman, and George Gruntz. Concert tours have taken him throughout the United States, Europe, Japan, and the Soviet Union. Varner has given lecture-demonstration workshops for the International Horn Society, the Netherlands Horn Society, and the Berklee School of Music. He has also received a National Endowment for the Arts grant.

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

*Tom Varner Quartet*, Soul Note 1017

*Motion Stillness*, Soul Note 1067

*Jazz French Horn*, New Note 1004

*Covert Action*, New Note 1009

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