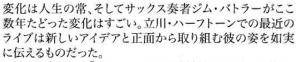
## The Jim Butler Quartet

At Half Tone, March 3rd



2003年のCD『Journeys』では斬新なオリジナル曲と、 選びぬかれた既成ナンバーがうまく組み合わされているが、 これはテキサスで録音され、バトラーがアルトとソプラノの 両方を吹いている。軽快なボサノバや、彼独特のなめらかな 節回しが堪能できる傑作である。

ところが、最新アルバム『Live in Tokyo!』にはまったく 異なるバトラーがいる。彼のサックスは以前よりずっと強烈 で、日本人バックバンドは遥かに自由。しかもこれが録音さ れたのはほんの1年3ヶ月前なのに、今のバトラーはもっと先 を進んでおり、ハーフトーンでのライブは数段強烈さを増し

演奏はオリジナル曲『Journey to the End of the Night』から始まる。どこまでも自由なエンジン全開の展開 は、破綻すれすれでも決して崩壊しない。

最新CDからの『Broken Heart』はタイトルそのままにひ りひりする曲だ。バトラーのサックスが絞りだす重厚な最低 音の上を、ドラムの上村計一郎のブラシが流れる。エンディ ングのパッセージはファラオ・サンダーズの宇宙的極限を彷 彿とさせる、なだれ落ちるように自由な表現で終わる。

次にくるのは軽快なノリのジョビン作品『Favela』であ る。バトラーが引くと、バンドの饗宴が始まる。ピアニスト・村 山としやはまるで幽体離脱の境地。これにバトラーが張り裂 けんばかりの音で応える。曲ごとに気分が変わるが、この曲 はファンクが濃厚だ。

『Journeys』の1曲『Wild Blue Horizon』からは、コル



トレーンの最も宗教的な瞬間に似た新生イメージが伝わ る。皮肉にも、バトラーの無調性を最も際立たせるのはこの 優しいメロディだ。上村は素手でドラムをこすり、村山の繊 細な音が快い。

そして甘美なスタンダードが数曲。『Body and Soul』 の企みのない素直な繊細さや、コルトレーンの『Straight Street』の躍動するリズム感こそ、このカルテットにふさわし

バトラーのオリジナル『Prayer For World Peace』はゴ スペル的高揚感のみなぎる仕上がりになった。悶絶のアル トサックスの咆哮に続き、トリオがそれぞれの内省的ソロで 曲をとり鎮める。

最後の曲『Little Train』は、その曲名の如く、疾走する汽 車のようにうねる。奔放なソロを叩きだす上村はまるでハリ ケーンの中の風車みたいだ。

これは疑いなくバトラーのバンドには違いないが、共演 者の音楽がしつかり彼を包みこみ、平等な表現余地を享受 している。コルトレーンやチャールズ・ロイドのような偉大な 求道者と同じく、このサックス奏者も栄光の旅の途上にある ようだ。ロ

Change is a necessary part of life and the changes that saxophonist Jim Butler has undergone in the past few years are quite remarkable. His recent gig at Half Tone in Tachikawa showed a man bristling with new ideas.

On his excellent 2003 CD, Journeys, he balanced a batch of inspired originals with some choice covers. Recorded in Texas, the album was a classy affair featuring Butler on



both alto and soprano. The disc bounced with the occasional bossa nova beat and some smooth blowing.

However, his latest album, Live In Tokyo!, showcases a whole new man. His blowing is much more intense and the Japanese band backing him jams far more freely. It was recorded a mere fifteen months ago but Butler has already moved on. His show at Half Tone pushed the intensity level up a notch.

The quartet started the set with an excellent original composition, "Journey To The End Of The Night." It was a full throttle free for all that threatened to lose control of itself but never did.

The tender "Broken Heart", also from the new CD, lived up to its title. Butler blew some beautiful bass heavy notes from the bottom register as drummer Keichiro Uemura floated over his kit with the brushes. The tune ended with a falling freeform passage that recalled Pharaoh Sanders at his most cosmic.

They then brought up the tempo with a rollicking take of Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Favela". When Butler sat out the band really took off, ravaging their instruments. Pianist Toshiya Murayama looked to be on the verge of an out of body experience. Butler responded by blowing his top. His vibe changed with each tune and the funk was deep on this cut.

"Wild Blue Horizon," from Journeys, had a new-dayrising vibe akin to Coltrane at his most spiritual. The soft melody was ironically responsible for some his most atonal blowing. Drummer Uemura played the skins with his bare hands and Murayama tickled some choice notes.

A few sweet standards were given a run-through. "Body And Soul" was delicate without being cautious and Coltrane's "Straight Street", with its knee-jerk rhythm was perfect for the quartet to explore. Butler's original "Prayer For World Peace" was an uplifting affair with an inspired gospel flavor. The saxophonist strangled his alto senseless before the band brought it down for some introspective individual playing

The final tune, "Little Train," surged like its locomotive namesake. Uemura took a wild drum solo, looking like a windmill in a hurricane. The quartet was undoubtedly Butler's band but he was completely wrapped up in his compatriots' music, giving then equal room to move. Like many of the great seekers, Trane or Charles Lloyd, this saxophonist is on a glorious journey.

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