

DAN STILL THE MAN ON NEW CD

by Wayne Corey (FFS-Wisconsin)

I remember the first time I heard Dan McMillion - a Thursday night at our FFS convention jam session. The best of times. Great music, great friends. And a guy with a trumpet strolls on stage and noodles into *A Night in Tunisia*. Diz wrote it and played it with Bird. Art Blakey & his Jazz Messengers did perhaps the definitive version in 1960 with Lee Morgan playing trumpet and Wayne Shorter blowing tenor - I'm sitting on a summer night in an air conditioned ballroom with a cold martini and this trumpet player hits a high note that fractures every glass in the room. So I do the only two logical things possible. I get another martini and I pay really close attention to the trumpet player. And I have been paying close attention to Dan McMillion's music ever since that night.

Dan McMillion has it all. He has his own big band and plays trumpet hotter than Gabriel. And, oh yes, he's a member of the Four Freshmen Society so he gets to hang around with us. Or, rather more to the point, we get to hang around with him and hear him play at our conventions.

Give It One, the latest CD from the Dan McMillion Jazz Orchestra, may be the most satisfying. Dan surrounds himself with brilliant musicians who swing hard. There is plenty of Dan's trademark Groovin' High trumpet but there is also ample proof that the Florida big band has big time soloists in every section. Intentional or not, more players seem to be given more solo opportunities on *Give It One*. I counted 20 solos for other members of the band and just 10 this time for the leader.

In the first track, *Just Friends*, Dan and trombone player Keith Oshiro trade solos with his familiar (and still spectacular) command of the upper register, proving Dan is still the man! Oshiro's trombone complements Mark Gould's swinging tenor on *Fan It Janet* and Oshiro & Gould join Dan and alto player Tom Dietz on a great Bill Holman chart for *Watermelon Man*, the Herbie Hancock gem that Hancock resists playing these days.

Dietz also gets a spotlight on the title track and *Footpath Caf*, two Maynard Ferguson compositions that remind us of the influence Maynard's music has had on the music Dan makes today. *Footpath Caf* opens with a bluesy Chris Rottmayer piano solo that takes the listener down the path to some great section interplay and a delightful Dietz solo that leads into Dan's solo. *Footpath Caf* leaves the listener wanting much more from the menu!

A similar approach is used on *Milestones*, the Miles Davis classic. Rottmayer walks the band into the song, Gould goes nuts on a tenor solo, the sections swing hard and Dan takes them all out on an, er, high note.

The McMillion band seems to pick one unexpected song for some big band bombast on each CD. This time it is Paul Simon's *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. Solos by Dan and Mark Gould make the 1960s folkie swing and the troubled water is really turbulent by the end of the track.

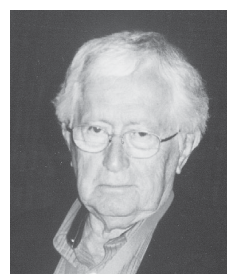
John Coltrane's *Niama* also gets exciting treatment. Cole Porter's *So In Love* opens with an (uncredited) bass line from Joe Porter and moves along with brass and reeds complementing each other while Dan takes mellow (by his standards!) flugelhorn and trumpet solos. The Frank Mantooth chart is simply a pleasure to hear. Rottmayer and Porter lead to a McMillion solo before the full band moves in behind and Tim Stamps takes a tenor turn. This is great jazz. The liner notes say this is the fifth CD by the Dan McMillion Jazz orchestra. I own them all. They just keep getting better. Do your ears a favor and **Give It One!**



Harry Lydic along Amsterdam Canal



Joyce & Colin Bishop with Harry



Bob Flamigan



Committee Members: Henry Grote, Pascal Aartman, Jan Smeding and Rob van Aberda



Palle, Bob and Sverre at the afterglow