

Jon Faddis



TERANGA—Koch. *The Hunters & Gatherers; Hey, Lalo!, Waltz for My Fathers & Brothers; Teranga; The Courtship; The Fibble-Ow Blues; Laurelyn; Transitions; The Baron.*

PERSONNEL: Jon Faddis, trumpet, flugelhorn, vocals; David Hazeltine, piano; Kyoshi Kitigawa, bass; Dion Parsons, drums; Alioune Faye, sabar; Abdou Mboup, djembe, talking drum; Russell Malone, guitar; Gary Smulyan, baritone sax; Frank Wess, alto flute; Clark Terry, flugelhorn, vocals.

By Clive Griffin

Teranga is Jon Faddis' first album release in quite some time, and a welcome creation. Kyoshi Kitagawa is the sole instrumental voice at the opening of the first track, "The Hunters and Gatherers," an original by Jon Faddis. Kitagawa uses single notes and double stops to bring to life the simple, but catchy, syncopated rhythm, essentially an ostinato (repeated) bass line that comprises the introduction. Little by little, drums are added. The introduction provides an unexpected entry into this first track. Indeed, Faddis' first statements offer a bit of the unexpected—and isn't that what jazz at it's most compelling and intriguing is all about? Faddis' muted trumpet, and brief understated phrases give us a glimpse into the breadth of this extraordinary trumpeter. Listeners and critics expecting the master to immediately regale them with his phenomenal high note capability, and intricate bebop lines—or who feel that they fully understand him (or fully understand any artist) need to be prepared for an expanded and different approach. Yes, we get hints of Faddis' virtuosity. And, yes, we acknowledge, as he does, his influence by, among others, Dizzy Gillespie. Yet, don't try to fence Faddis in. In the same way that, following some open trumpet work, the ostinato figure blossoms into a different groove (a bossa feel), so do the expectations created by Faddis' past, blossoming into new possibilities—in this case possibilities Faddis imaginatively makes real.

The band sets comfortably into a bright medium swing groove on "Hey, Lalo!" Kitagawa gets the first solo. He paves the way for a magnificent muted trumpet solo by Faddis. Faddis moves effortlessly between swinging syncopated eighth note phrases, and impeccably articulated double-time ideas. His solo provides a terse lesson—one of many on this release—about playing jazz trumpet. Sound, full-bodied tone, intonation, articulation, phrasing—they're all here, and in overwhelmingly rich abundance.

"Waltz for My Fathers and Brothers" is a ballad in 3/4 time. Faddis shows his gentle side. He is certainly noted for his intense energy playing lead trumpet, and exploring the far reaches of the instrument's range. "Waltz" is characterized by relaxed tempo, dynamics, and simplicity, and bears some of the flavor of Thad Jones' "A Child Is Born." Artists of Faddis' caliber may focus on, or be otherwise noted for certain approaches to performing—in his case pyrotechnics. Untrained observers mistakenly pigeonhole artists into what they think he or she should, or can do. Faddis has amassed a broad range of experience and skills that enable him to easily and seamlessly move to take any approach he wants—shattering the illusion of pre-disposed perception. He does just that in his pensive, delicate, and sensitive performance on this track.

Teranga is defined loosely as hospitality in Senegalese. On this title track, Hazeltine delivers a

commanding, albeit brief melodic solo, employing cross rhythms—superimposed over the 6/4 pulse, and building a climax to Faddis high-note explorations that follow. The suite moves to a samba groove, where Faddis gets ample opportunity to demonstrate the many reasons he has earned a position as one of the leading trumpeters in the pantheon of those who have carried and continue to carry the trumpet torch in this music. “Teranga” features ample drum and percussion by Dion Parson, Abdou Mboup and Alioune Faye. Frank Wess also gets a moment in the sun, contributing a lyrical solo on flute.

“The Courtship” is a magnificent bossa-nova, as soft, light and relaxed as is its depth and intensity. Hazeltine’s spirited solo dances delightfully with melodic ideas. Faddis follows with a lyrical solo—again breaking the mold of the high note trumpet work for which he is amply noted. His sound is irresistible. His taste, and the contradictory elements of intensity and restraint gives us a glimpse of the 360 degree landscape that is Jon Faddis. This is a track I found myself returning to several times over.

Clark Terry generously provided Faddis with introductions and an entrée into the New York studio scene when he arrived in New York in the 1970s. “The Fibble-Ow Blues” brings together the senior Terry on flugelhorn, with Faddis on trumpet on this down-home, slow blues. Terry, “Mumbles,” offers up some of his signature mumbling, and Faddis engages him humorously as the dialogue ensues. If the dialogue could only be brought to the U.N., the manufactured polarization of people might melt into a world of smiles.

It’s just Faddis on muted trumpet and guitarist Russell Malone on “Laurelyn.” Malone prompts Faddis with the ideal accompaniment. The solid bossa-like underpinning frees up all concerns and gives Faddis the foundation to shine. He is lyrical, delightful, and takes command of delivering a heartfelt message on the tune he thoughtfully composed for his partner.

“The Baron” was composed by Faddis for pianist Kenny Barron. The band takes the tempo up on the album’s closer. This minor-key based original, moves from a Latin groove to a searing up-tempo swing. Gary Smulyan takes charge as he serves a commanding solo on baritone sax.

Faddis maintains a breakneck schedule, leading the Chicago Jazz Ensemble, the Jon Faddis Jazz Orchestra of New York (the successor to the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band), his quartet, teaching at Purchase College-SUNY, and more. Simply not having the time to enter the studio is the only apparent reason for the amount of time between his previous release and this excellent new album. Let’s hope he’s busy writing new material now and already preparing for the next one, so we won’t be kept waiting to enjoy more magnificent sounds from this virtuoso, and deeply committed contributor to this music.