

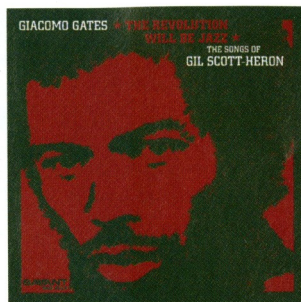
**Giacomo Gates**  
*The Revolution Will Be Jazz: The Songs Of Gil Scott-Heron*

SAVANT 2116  
 ★★½

It takes a brave soul to approach the repertoire of the recently departed Gil Scott-Heron. Not only did he write material that was often very time-specific, but his verses, regardless of their political outlook, sounded as if he was tussling with very personal demons. Then there's the plangent yet passionate delivery that Scott-Heron gave his material, which required method-acting brilliance to interpret.

Veteran singer Giacomo Gates takes an admirable stab at interpreting that work on this disc, employing his rich, expressive baritone to some wisely chosen Scott-Heron compositions. A portion of the disc's success comes from Gates staying, for the most part, in his lane. He steers clear of Scott-Heron's more racially charged polemics, and he never tries to capture Scott-Heron's fury on the spoken-word pieces. Indeed, after so many anemic readings and revisions of "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," Gates gets major kudos for not bothering fans with yet another listless version.

Mostly fronting a nimble quartet—with Claire Daly adding baritone saxophone and flute on a couple of songs—Gates is at his most persuasive on ballads. His rendering of "This Is A Prayer For Everybody To Be Free" is sim-



ply divine as he imbues the lyrics with just the right amount of optimism and hard-knock wisdom, while Tony Lombardozi's caressing guitar accompaniment and the billowy swing from bassist Lonnie Plaxico and drummer Vincent Ector enhance the song's sense of hopefulness. The melan-

choly "Madison Avenue" comes off splendidly; Gates highlights the song's central theme of consumption and the economic social divide with bittersweet conviction. On the somber "Winter In America" and "New York City," Gates brings an understated "been there" angst without tipping into melodrama.

Things falter a bit on the more mid-tempo pieces like "Show Bizness" and "Is That Jazz." The swinging makeovers aren't necessarily bad; they just don't rise up to the level of the ballads. Maybe it's because Gates' behind-the-beat phrasing seems to lag too much with the rhythm section, or that on those songs as well as "It's Your World" and "Gun" Gates' delivery neuters the saltiness of Scott-Heron's verses. Those blemishes, however, don't sully Gates' brighter moments.

—John Murphy

**The Revolution Will Be Jazz: The Songs Of Gil Scott-Heron:** Show Bizness; This Is A Prayer For Everybody To Be Free; Lady Day And John Coltrane; Legend In His Own Mind; Madison Avenue; Gun; Winter In America; Is That Jazz; New York City, It's Your World. (49:59)

**Personnel:** Giacomo Gates, vocals; John Di Martino, piano, whistling (7); Tony Lombardozi, guitar; Lonnie Plaxico, bass; Vincent Ector, drums; Claire Daly, baritone saxophone (2), flute (7).

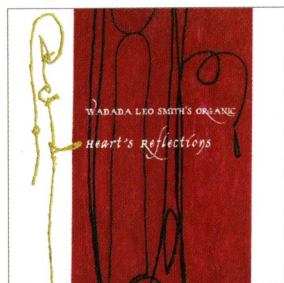
**Ordering info:** [jazzdepot.com](http://jazzdepot.com)

**Wadada Leo Smith's Organic**  
*Heart's Reflections*

CUNEIFORM 330/331  
 ★★½

Wadada Leo Smith is no stranger to electric music; he played in his stepfather's blues bands when he was a teen, and merged the sounds of his youth with Rastafarian mysticism on the 1983 recording *Procession Of The Great Ancestry* (Nessa). But he didn't start to play electric jazz until Henry Kaiser recruited him to play in Yo! Miles, an ensemble formed to play compositions first played by Miles Davis between 1969 and 1974. The 14-piece Organic is Smith's forum to combine the heavy rhythms, open-ended structures and amped-up sound with more contemporary instrumentation and his omnipresent spiritual orientation.

This double-disc set comprises five long pieces; the longest, "Heart's Reflections: Splendors Of Light And Purification" (on Disc One), runs nearly an hour. Smith sounds magnificent, as does drummer Pheeroan akLaff, but not all of the other sidemen are up to the demands of keeping long passages—



accompanied mainly by a heavy backbeat—interesting.

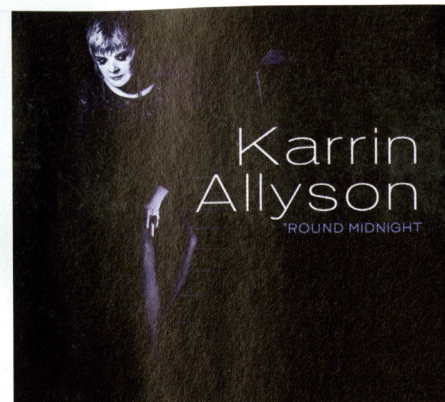
Smith gives author Toni Morrison, trumpeter Don Cherry, violinist and fellow AACM member Leroy Jenkins and Sufi philosopher Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili their due. The laptops in the background, acoustic piano in the foreground and Smith's frequent pairing of acoustic and electric trumpets all contribute to a sound that shines brightly where Miles Davis glowered. And where Davis reveled in evil vibes, Smith seems to be searching for a funk that exalts. This music lacks the concentrated beauty and power of certain other Smith projects, but the effect it is reaching for should be just as powerful once Smith works out a few kinks.

—Bill Meyer

**Heart's Reflections:** (Disc One) Don Cherry's Electric Sonic Garden (For Don Cherry); Heart's Reflections: Splendors Of Light And Purification (for Shaykh Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili) (60:09). (Disc Two) Heart's Reflections: Splendors Of Light And Purification (for Shaykh Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili); Toni Morrison: The Black Hole (Sagittarius A'); Conscience And Epic Memory (For Toni Morrison); Leroy Jenkins's Air Steps (For Leroy Jenkins) (49:51).

**Personnel:** Wadada Leo Smith, trumpet, electric trumpet; Michael Gregory, Brandon Ross, Josh Gerowitz, Lamar Smith, electric guitar; Pheeroan akLaff, drums; John Lindberg, acoustic bass, electric acoustic bass; Skuli Sverrison, electric bass; Angelica Sanchez, acoustic piano, Wurliizer electric piano; Stephanie Smith, violin; Casey Anderson, alto saxophone; Casey Butler, tenor saxophone; Mark Traylor, Charlie Burgin, laptop.

**Ordering info:** [cuneiformrecords.com](http://cuneiformrecords.com)



**Karrin Allyson**  
*'Round Midnight*

CONCORD JAZZ 32662

★★★★★

Karrin Allyson has long been known for gathering choice material from far-flung sources and fashioning superior albums—a skill never to be sneezed at. This ennui-soaked program is no exception; her ability to shape songs to conform to an overall vision more than justifies her production credit shared with Nick Phillips. Opening with the suicidal "Turn Out The Stars" is a challenge, but Allyson's many shades of emotion and implication bring the mood up with Paul Simon's wistful "April Come She Will." The musicality is substantial yet quietly impressive: like changing keys in the middle of a line on "Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most" or the dissolute piano underneath "Smile."

Allyson's condensed alto voice telescopes much into a small dynamic range. Singing the difficult octave jump to "Sophisticated Lady" is secondary to the understated pang of her reading. "Send In The Clowns" may be a tad hoary through overexposure, but recasting as a slow bossa gives it longer legs. And a voice-bass duet on the title track yields another fine version of Thelonious Monk's classic with an artist's individual stamp on it.

Like Sarah Vaughan and Carmen McRae, magical moments occur in Allyson's live sets when she accompanies herself on the piano. Her keyboard work here is almost subliminal—as much felt as heard. The recessed rhythm vamp on "Spring" helps her to subtly swing at the absolute lowest possible tempo and dynamic.

Low-key dividends abound: Bob Sheppard's murky bass clarinet on Gordon Jenkins's shamefully neglected "Goodbye," Randy Weinstein's tangy harmonica, Matt Wilson's beautiful brushwork, Rod Fleeman's filigreed guitar. But it's all in service to Allyson's evocative styling.

—Kirk Silsbee

**'Round Midnight:** Turn Out The Stars; April Come She Will; Goodbye; I'm Always Chasing Rainbows; Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most; Smile; Sophisticated Lady; There's No Such Thing As Love; The Shadow Of Your Smile; Send In The Clowns; 'Round Midnight. (44:48)

**Personnel:** Karrin Allyson, vocals, piano; Fender Rhodes; Bob Sheppard, soprano and tenor saxophone, alto flute, bass clarinet; Rod Fleeman, acoustic guitar, electric guitar; Ed Howard, bass; Matt Wilson, drums; Randy Weinstein, harmonica.

**Ordering info:** [concordmusicgroup.com](http://concordmusicgroup.com)