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Jazz | John Brown, Terms of Art: A Tribute to Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers -- Vol. 1 ***

3 Stars

OWEN CORDLE

John Brown, director of Duke University's jazz program, has a percussive, infectiously swinging beat on the bass. On "Terms of Art: A Tribute to Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers -- Vol. 1" (JBJazz), you can hear how solidly he might have fit in the line of bassists that performed with drummer Blakey over the years -- bassists such as Doug Watkins, Jymie Merritt, Reggie Workman, Dennis Irwin, Charles Fambrough and Lonnie Plaxico.

For the album, Brown employs New Orleans-born drummer Adonis Rose and North Carolina musicians Ray Codrington (trumpet), Brian Miller (alto and tenor saxophone) and Gabe Evens (piano). Rose captures the Blakey style via a heavy backbeat and the occasional thundering transition passage between choruses. But he also allows his New Orleans, second-line instincts to shine through, as on the opening "Caravan." Codrington leads off the solos on this tune with a perky, darting outing reminiscent of the late Thad Jones.

"Moanin'," a call-and-response Jazz Messengers staple, features Brown in the lead answered with a musical "Amen" in the horns. Evens' solo builds from a light-fingered single line to a stomping chordal climax. The pianist also excels on "The Preacher," a rhythm section track with Brown walking a fat, uplifting beat in the spirit of Ray Brown (no kin). On "Lady Bop," another funky track, Miller uncorks a fine, speechlike tenor solo full of bluesy turns and bent notes.

The Brown quintet celebrates the release of this album and "Merry Christmas, Baby," a holiday CD, with a concert at 7 tonight at Hayti Heritage Center in Durham. The Triangle Youth Jazz Ensemble opens. Part of the \$10 ticket price benefits the Duke Cancer Patient Support Program. Call 683-1709 for tickets and information.

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