

Open World All Stars

JAZZ CONNECTION (SEA BREEZE VISTA)



Russia meets Louisville on this two-CD set, with the visitors dominating the music. Four Russian combos, all called the Open World All Stars, are

featured performing at the University of Louisville on these tracks, recorded from 2004 through 2007. While the locals are directed by saxophonist Mike Tracy and 11 students (including two from Canada and one from Brazil), four faculty members and two American pros participate, the Russians are mostly in the spotlight.

While not every solo is memorable, many young talents have their featured spots on this twofer. While it is easy to think of Russian jazz as being avant-garde à la the Ganelin Trio, most of the music on this program is conventional hard bop, often influenced by Art Blakey (who is saluted on "Art's Blues"). Whether it is standards or originals by the Russians, the emphasis is on swinging and chordal improvisation.

The instrumentation of the combos changes from track to track, ranging from sextets to a version of "Blue Bossa" that is a duet between altoist Ovagem Sultanyan and tenor saxophonist Mike Tracy. Among the

other colorful talents who are not known (yet) in the U.S. are guitarist Aleksandra Mogilevich, pianist-singer Natalya Smirnova, altoist Zhanna Ilmar, soprano-saxophonist Alexis Marsh, Makim Nekrasov on harmonica and singer Anastasia Glazkova. Of the Americans, Mike Tracy and tenor saxophonist Michael Arthurs (who is very impressive on Joe Henderson's "Punjab") fare best.