

BOB NELL
Why I Like Coffee

New World Records 80419

Composer and pianist Bob Nell was born and raised in Montana; he lives there today. He is best known for his work with Kelly Roberty and Brad Edwards, collectively known as The N/R/E Trio, with whom he performs regularly throughout the Midwest and Canada, backing such jazz luminaries as Eddie Harris, Ray Brown, Woody Shaw, Freddie Hubbard, David "Fathead" Newman, Bobby Hutcherson, Nat Adderley, Emily Remler, Michele Hendricks, Sonny Fortune, Hank Crawford, and many others.

I first heard about Bob Nell shortly after moving to Seattle; he spent some time there thirteen or fourteen years ago and is near-legendary in certain circles. Nell deserves to be a legend, in my view, because he has something one might expect to find more often, but doesn't: a style firmly rooted in the jazz tradition, yet consistently original. He isn't a neo-traditionalist, a radical groundbreaker, or a fashion statement--just a great pianist who writes distinctive tunes.

Take *Blues for KB*, the unaccompanied piano solo that opens this disc. A basic twelve-bar blues dedicated to pianist Kenny Barron, the theme and solo string together phrases from the obscure to the funky, and weave through harmonies both familiar and uncharted. This leads into a quintet featuring trumpeter Jack Walrath and trombonist Ray Anderson performing an episodic *Why I Like Coffee*. *EMREM*, for the late Emily Remler, is a personal favorite of mine. Simple and lyrical, this is a beautiful track with a sweet and dark solo by bassist Kelly Roberty. *Fashion Storage* is quintessential Bob Nell. The theme is elegant, with subtle twists and turns and a surprising bridge. This piece alone illustrates to me everything that is important and unique in Bob Nell's music. *Taking a Chance on Love* is Nell's reharmonization of a classic standard, and is a good example of how he thinks harmonically. Each soloist makes a strong statement on a difficult set of changes.

Throughout these and the other pieces on this recording, Roberty and Edwards clearly display a strong chemistry with Nell worthy of their long association. Anderson has employed Nell's trio recently for his own projects, and Walrath, also a Montana native, has worked with the pianist for more than twelve years. Both musicians, not surprisingly, make a strong contribution to all of the quintet compositions.

Over the years, critics and listeners have often compared Bob Nell to the great composer and pianist Herbie Nichols. I like that comparison, not because they sound alike, but because Nell shares Nichols's creative purpose: to make a truly personal statement within the form, without looking backward and without compromise.

—Wayne Horvitz

SELECTED DISCOGRAPY

As a leader:

Chasin' a Classic, Bob Nell: Piano/Double Bass, Cadence Jazz Records, CJR1022

Injury or Malpractice?, Bob Nell, Plechmo-1

As a sideman:

Open Stream, Fred Raulston, Inner City Records, IC1054

Michael Bisio Sextet, CT Records, CT1

By All Means, Mary Jane Williams, Queen City Records, QCR1

Montana, Montana Jazz Quartet with special guest Jack Walrath, Labor Records, LAB5

Bob Nell is the winner of the 1991 Dewars Performance Profiles Arts Award for jazz piano composition.

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Bob Nell: piano

Kelly Roberty: bass

Brad Edwards: drums

Jack Walrath: trumpet

Ray Anderson: trombone

Producer: Wayne Horvitz

Executive producer: Arthur Moorhead

Engineer: James Farber

Assistant engineer: David Schiffman

Recorded at Skyline Studios, New York City, November 25 & 26, 1991

Mastering: New York Digital Recording, Inc.

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Cover design: Stephen Byram

All compositions except *Taking a Chance on Love* By Bob Nell, published by Plechmo Music BMI
Taking a Chance on Love by Vernon Duke and John Latouche, published by EMI Music Publishing

1- Blues for KB (2:52)

2- Why I Like Coffee (8:37)

3- Emrem (6:14)

4- Nightspot (5:35)

5- Achromaticism (4:03)

6- Taking a Chance on Love (8:18)

7- Fashion Storage (6:27)

8- For Monk (6:47)

9- Cold Feet (4:50)

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