

**MARIO PAVONE**  
**Toulon Days**

**New World Records 80420**

Despite increased public awareness of jazz over the past decade, it remains difficult for adventurous musicians to establish a reputation, attract the interest of record labels, and build a listening audience. Playing a style of music outside the current trend hurts one's chances; so does living outside New York City, which is still considered to be the gravitational center of jazz activity. For these, and possibly other reasons, none of the musicians on this disc are listed in the most recent jazz reference books. But this is no reflection on the quality of the music they play, the vitality of their expression, or the depth of their commitment.

This is a marvelous sextet, crisp in the ensembles, passionate in solos, put together by bassist/composer Mario Pavone. Pavone himself has not yet received the exposure and celebrity his talent and experience warrant. This may be due to his instrument, which usually finds him buried at the back of the bandstand. Or perhaps it is because he's a Connecticut native who has chosen to avoid the competitive New York scene. This is not to suggest he's been inactive; far from it. He was one of the cofounders (along with trumpeter Leo Smith and drummer Gerry Hemingway) of the now quiescent Creative Musicians' Improviser's Forum (CMIF), a Connecticut cooperative that was based on the principles of Chicago's AACM (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians). Although he didn't begin playing bass until he was 24, in the mid-Sixties, within a few short years he was touring with pianist Paul Bley. During the early Seventies he also began a collaboration with the iconoclastic trumpeter Bill Dixon that has continued intermittently to this day, and which includes several recordings. Pavone has also had fruitful ongoing musical relationships with Leo Smith, Dewey Redman, Bobby Naughton, Pheeron akLaff, Marty Ehrlich, and Anthony Braxton, among others.

A strong, supportive bassist, Pavone's compositional ambitions led him to form his own record label, Alacra. Of the three discs he released between 1979 and 1988, *Shodo* is especially noteworthy. Subtitled "Music for Marimba and Horn Choir," its scoring is evocative, its textures striking. However, the music on *Shodo* is open and expansive, different from the tight, muscular arrangements heard here. Pavone explains the change in compositional attitude:

"I basically came up as a freer player, but through the Eighties I was a kind of house bassist for a club here in Connecticut. So I played with a lot of great mainstream players—Sonny Fortune, Junior Cook, Bob Berg, Eddie Henderson—every week a different guest passing through from New York. So that part of my playing, more tune-oriented, developed. Then I was in France this past [1991] summer, and that's when I wrote the compositions that are on this disc. So they're influenced by these experiences but also by my interest in various aspects of time. Some of that comes from my composing on the bass. Most bass players, I believe, write at the piano, but I don't usually get to the piano until much later, if at all."

These tunes do sparkle with unexpected accents, juxtaposed themes, and instrumental combinations, and a rhythmic immediacy that catches the ear and won't let go. Pavone adds, "I often start with a rhythm, and I like unusual sounds, so I like to use different time signatures, and with what I guess you'd call a whole tone feeling—the way the notes fall on the bass, playing whole tones, whole steps all the way—that brings a fresh sound." The tricky phrasing of "Tepito" is typical of Pavone's

approach, as is the hard-driving “Z Hopper,” contrasting a convoluted melody with a simple, soulful beat. In addition, these tunes are full of rich voicings and felicitous details—the pairing of flutes on “Colin Mac,” the counterpointed tenor and trombone solos on “Toulon,” the contribution of Marty Ehrlich’s wily clarinet on “Walking Man Mystery,” the looser-by-design “Freedom Song,” and “Old & New Dreams,” an atmospheric tango with echoes of Carla Bley, aptly devoted to the heartfelt tenor of Joshua Redman (whose father, Dewey Redman, is a charter member of the quartet Old & New Dreams).

If anything, the nature of these attractive tunes falls somewhere between the poles of Pavone’s two acknowledged compositional influences, Paul Bley and Anthony Braxton. The vibrancy of the writing inspires the musicians to vivid, incisive solos, which in turn energize the compositions. The musicians, too, are well chosen. Drummer Steve Johns and alto saxophonist Thomas Chapin comprise, with Pavone, the Thomas Chapin Trio, and the altoist performs here with real urgency and élan. Pianist Hotep Galeta, a longtime partner of Jackie McLean now teaching at the University of Capetown, South Africa, provides thrilling solos as well as the appropriately titled romp “Monk in Soweto.” Trombonist Steve Davis, a member of Art Blakey’s last group, brings Messenger-like stability to the front line, and the previously mentioned Joshua Redman makes an auspicious recording debut.

Such a match of material and musicianship makes for rewarding listening.

—Art Lange

*Art Lange is a former editor of Down Beat, and writes about jazz and classical music for publications around the world.*

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

As a leader:

*Sharpeville*, Mario Pavone. Alacra 1012

*Shodo*, Mario Pavone. Alacra 1004

As a sideman:

*Anima*, Thomas Chapin. Knitting Factory Works 121

*Third Force*, Thomas Chapin. Knitting Factory Works 103

*Son of Sisyphus*, Bill Dixon. Soul Note 121138

*Thoughts*, Bill Dixon. Soul Note 1111

I would like to thank all of the musicians associated with this project, and especially acknowledge Marty, Thomas, Hotep, and Peter McEachern for their invaluable assistance in putting the music together. I would also like to thank James Farber for great skill in committing the music to tape.

—Mario Pavone

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Tom Varner/*Long Night Big Day* (80410)  
Marty Ehrlich and the Dark Woods Ensemble/*Emergency Peace* (80409)  
Butch Morris/*Dust to Dust* (80408)  
Kamikaze Ground Crew/*The Scenic Route* (NW 400)  
The Jazz Passengers/*Implement Yourself* (NW 398)  
The New York Composer's Orchestra/Music by Marty Ehrlich, Robin Holcomb, Wayne Horvitz, and Doug Wieselmann (NW 397)

**MARIO PAVONE Toulon Days**

1. Tepito (4:50)
2. Old & New Dreams (for Dewey Redman) (6:12)
3. Monk in Soweto (6:53)
4. Walking Mystery Man (4:50)
5. Toulon (5:17)
6. Colin Mac (2:58)
7. Z Hopper (5:58)
8. Freedom Song (9:38)

Thomas Chapin, alto saxophone, flute; Joshua Redman, tenor saxophone; Steve Davis, trombone; Hotep Idris Galeta, piano; Mario Pavone, bass; Steve Johns: drums; Marty Ehrlich, clarinet, flute (on "Walking Mystery Man" and "Colin Mac")

All compositions except “Monk in Soweto” by Mario Pavone. Published by Pavo Publishing/BMI. “Monk in Soweto” by Hotep Idris Galeta. Published by Ceilbar Music/BMI. “Tepito” and “Z Hopper” arranged by Thomas Chapin. “Old & New Dreams,” “Toulon,” and “Freedom Song” arranged by Marty Ehrlich.

Producer: Marty Ehrlich

Executive Producer: Arthur Moorhead

Engineer: James Farber

Assistant engineer: David Schiffman

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