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Alive XVI: This One's for Buddy!

University of Northern Colorado Jazz Lab Band 1 | United Jazz Artists

By [Jack Bowers](#)

The XVIth live recording by director Gene Aitken's intrepid UNC Jazz Lab Band 1 is also a 1st — the first two-disc set in the series of concerts that dates back to the early '80s. It is, however, the 11nd dedicated to a long-time member of the UNC staff. Last year's release, *Alive XV: This One's for Sandy*, honored Sandy Scott, associate director of the UNC Jazz Studies program; *Alive XVI* pays tribute to trombonist/teacher Buddy Baker who ended his distinguished 40-year career, most of which was spent at UNC, in May 1998. Unlike Scott, however, Baker is more than an interested spectator. Before saying farewell, he unlimbers his well-seasoned horn to give the undergrads one last lesson on "Indiana" and "The Nearness of You," which open Disc 1 in a most charming manner while setting a lofty standard for what is to follow. Luckily (although there's far more than luck involved), the band is able to live up to the promise of those introductory tracks, passionately sinking its collective teeth into John Clayton's meaty "Soupbone" and gorging itself on the variety of goodies that spice the rest of the menu including another captivating chart by Clayton ("Brush This"), the Jerome Kern standard "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" (which opens Disc 2 at breakneck speed), Alex North's love theme from *Spartacus* (arranged by Maria Schneider and included on her album *Coming About*), three original compositions by Steve Wiest, two by Vince Mendoza and one each by Eric Richards, Russell Ferrante and Charles Gray. As we remarked about last year's release, sound quality, once problematic, is now first-class, with excellent balance, no audience noise and only hushed applause at the end of each number, enabling the listener to appreciate fully one of the foremost college-level ensembles in the country. The highlights are too many to mention, as nothing on either disc is less than exemplary. The various soloists, the most frequently heard of whom are tenor Vernon, alto Rigby, trumpeters Roach and Steinwehe, pianist Frane and drummer Vermillion (who leads a passionately supportive rhythm section), play with alertness and enthusiasm. Every section is strong, and the lead trumpeter, whoever he is (there may be more than one), nails every demanding passage cleanly. Playing time for the two discs (92:05) isn't overly generous, but everything on them is first-class. It may sound hackneyed to write that this is another marvelous session by a singularly talented Jazz ensemble, but that is exactly the case.

Track listing: Disc 1 — Indiana; The Nearness of You; Soupbone; Orange Guitars; Rain Codes; Fuego Azul; Downtown (49:44). Disc 2 — Smoke Gets in Your Eyes; Brush This; Fortune Teller; Second Thought; Overview; Spartacus; Night Visions (42:21).

Personnel:

Lance Rigby, Dan Boulton, Farrell Vernon, C.J. Kocher, Nick Frazee, saxophones; Brad Steinwehe, Paul Pugh, Ted DiSanti, Jeremy Brekke (3, 4, 13, 14), Gary Cellar, Steve Roach, trumpets; Wade Eisinger, Dave Wiske, Geoff Libby, Craig Gosnell, Andy Wolfe (11, 14), Thad Reatherford (10), trombones; Ryan Frane, keyboards; Kyle Malone, guitar; Greg Garrison, bass; Terry Vermillion, drums; Willie O'Burke, percussion (6); Jeff Davis, congas (4).

Contact: United Jazz Artists Records, P.O. Box 23, Greeley, CO 80632 (phone 970235121943; fax 97023512536).

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