

anticipated better. Of course, the group aren't helped by a rather unsympathetic sound. The piano sounds tinny and the bass is far too prominent in the mix. These 10 tunes, eight originals plus Miles' 'Solar' and 'All The Things You Are', offer every opportunity for improvisation and swing. But the latter is in short supply, only really surfacing on the final, "bonus" track 'Lunar'. 'All The Things You Are' perhaps speaks loudest for what is wrong with this album. A lovely tune indeed but the old warhorse needs to be ridden boldly and well. Here the poor old nag gave her best but even the most generous listener would beg for her to be put out to pasture. I was bored well before the end. **Duncan Heining**

Boots Randolph

A Whole New Ballgame

Zoho ZM200706 | ★★

Randolph (ts), Steve Willits (p), Jason Webb (ky), Mark Stallings (org), Roddy Smith (g), Tim Smith (b) and Ray Van Rotz (d). Rec. Feb-Apr 2006

This unexpected album auditioned before Boots' recent demise, promised both entertainment and expertise. After all, it takes musicianship to pull off the virtuoso playing of 'Yakety Sax' by which he was immortalised. He was the same age as Getz and Coltrane would have been, and his familiarity with some great standards covers the repertoire of Charlie Parker ('Billie's Bounce') and even Don Byas. A slightly rudimentary rhythmic feel is compensated by the rugged tone, somewhere between Ben Webster and Illinois Jacquet. But, if the saxist sounds as if he's rushing the beat sometimes, that's because the bassist – a long-time Nashville sidekick who's also the producer – is dragging the beat enough to give the electric bass a bad name. The next least satisfactory element is the rather wooden drumming, followed by stiff piano work and the use of synthesised strings on three tracks, including 'Round Midnight'. A press release mentioned planned appearances at various county fairs this summer and, in October, a visit to New York's Iridium, so now we'll just have to imagine Boots with a metropolitan rhythm-section.

Brian Priestley

Manuel Rocheman

Cactus Dance

Nocturne NTC412 | ★★

Rocheman (p), Scott Colley (b) and Antonio Sanchez (d). Rec. 21-22 Mar 2006

The fortysomething French pianist is

sufficiently well-known in his home country to earn sponsorship from a major bank for several years, and to gain the chance to record in New York with a hot rhythm-section. They do everything that's required and certainly don't hold back, as you would expect from Colley and Sanchez, who has been on key albums by Metheny, Mike Brecker, Danilo Pérez and David Sánchez. Rocheman for his part is one of the only students of Martial Solal but doesn't sound at all like his mentor, opting for a left-hand heavily influenced by McCoy and a right-hand often recalling Bill – so, as you can imagine, he sometimes sounds like Chick. But he has a mind of his own, with five varied originals while versions of pieces by Bill, Keith and other pianists don't sound too derivative of their composers. Indeed, he sounds most like late-period Evans on an extended up-tempo 'You Must Believe In Spring', the sole track to include a switch from acoustic to electric keyboard and back.

Brian Priestley

The Rodriguez Brothers

Conversations

Savant SCD 2082 | ★★

Robert Rodriguez (p), Michael Rodriguez (t, flhn), David Sanchez (ts), Carlos Henriquez, Ricardo Rodriguez (b) and Antonio Sanchez (d). Rec. 2006

And still they continue to come. Two more incredibly talented musicians from Cuban families, raised in Miami and New York, really make the most of every minute of their debut album as co-leaders. Robert has been with Ray Barretto and Roy Haynes (he's on that recent excellent live date featuring Jaleel Shaw), while Michael was the only 'non-name' on the last Charlie Haden Liberation Orchestra CD. Robert's style recalls Herbie Hancock at his most fluent. His self-confidence, combined with an impressive technique and really interesting choice of notes, makes every piano solo special and his comping behind others' excursions is a trip on its own. Michael is a fine trumpeter, with a pure tone, more of a romantic than Robert, who also makes every note count, with an identity that reminds me of Jeremy Pelt (a compliment to them both). The material is a highly successful mix of jazz and Latin jazz. Latin rhythms subtly permeate almost all the tunes and the astonishing Antonio Sanchez is a true master of both idioms, often changing the whole percussive direction towards the end of some tracks. David Sanchez only appears on two tracks (a G Flat blues and a bomba), but plays with a creative