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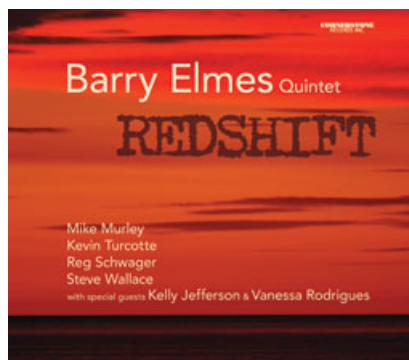
## Give the Toronto drummers some (CD reviews)

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### Redshift (Cornerstone Records) Barry Elmes Quintet



*Redshift* is only the fourth CD in 20 years from the Barry Elmes Quintet on the veteran Toronto drummer's own Cornerstone label. In this case, familiarity breeds great ease and connection in playing with one another.

Elmes' group consists of the cream of Toronto's jazz establishment — saxophonist Mike Murley, trumpeter Kevin Turcotte and bassist Steve Wallace have been with him since 1991, while guitarist Reg Schwager at some point replaced the retiring Ed Bickert. With *Redshift*, Elmes wanted to extend his group's sonic palette, and to this end the disc also features Kelly Jefferson adding flute or tenor saxophone on three tracks, as well as organist Vanessa Rodrigues on three tracks.

As a composer, the 59-year-old Elmes remains true to bopping tunes, sometimes with a few drummerly twists (the opener, *Reading Week*, seems to flourish in two grooves at once, Wayne Shorter's *This Is For Albert* has been updated with some 3/4 bars). All of the music is crisply arranged and executed, especially the bright, swinging title track, the shuffling minor-key rhythm change-y kind of tune *called Stumpy* and above all *The Reincarnation of Ratboy*. That tune, another minor-key medium tempo swinger, is a cavalcade of timbres and counterpoint bolstered by flute, muted trumpet and organ. On *The Brush-Off*, which features the jovial sparring of Murley and fellow tenor man Jefferson, Elmes shows off his brushwork prowess — to the extent that I find myself thinking that sweeping as he does is becoming a bit of a lost art among younger drummers.

The disc ends with *Abide With Me*, the hymn by Monk (William Henry, not Thelonious Sphere) that was also covered by Monk (Thelonious Sphere). On it, as on *Ratboy* and the slow, moody tune *Theme For Sterling Hayden*, Rodrigues adds organ colouring, fattening the lean group's sound just a touch. The only

question I'd have for Elmes regarding his CD is why he chose not to give Rodrigues, who can burn and then some, some solo space.

**There (Anzic)**  
**Ernesto Cervini Quartet**



A generation younger than Elmes, drummer Ernesto Cervini, 29, leads a group that's more content to let everything hang out on the truly rambunctious live CD *There*.

Recorded less than a year ago at the Cellar in Vancouver, the disc features Cervini and his bandmates — saxophonist Joel Frahm, pianist Adrean Farrugia and bassist Dan Loomis — taking most every opportunity to get outside of any boxes that their material initially imposes. Musical excitement and even hilarity ensue.

There are two ballads by Cervini, *Gramps* and the waltzing *Tullamore*, that are relatively restrained. Farrugia's groovy and likable tune *Woebegone* is not so malleable either.

But more often, the music tends to the wide open, as on and Frahm's ballad *Alert*, Cervini's no-borders tunes *Little Black Bird* and *TGV*

and the drummer's *Monk's Dream* contrafact *The Monks of Oka*. Then, the musical charge, led usually by Frahm or Farrugia of both of them in quick-witted interactions, is filled with sparks, crunch and even nudge-nudge musical quotes.

Exhibit B: Here's the Kamloops version of the heartland/swing arrangement of *Secret Love* by New York trumpeter Nadjé Noordhuis, complete with Frahm quoting *Rockin' in Rhythm* and *Camptown Races*:

On *There*, you can often practically hear the musicians smiling and reveling in their creativity, musical repartee and, yes, the odd cornball joke. (I declare Frahm the king of quotes on the CD — although Farrugia's not far behind — given the saxophonist's deployment, if my ears aren't failing me, of not only *Popcorn*, but also the guitar riff from *Wanna Be Startin' Something*.

But seriously folks, there some superb, high-energy, spur-of-the-moment music on *There*. (The biggest quibble I have with the disc is that the Cellar's piano sounds a bit brittle to me, but it doesn't seem to have impeded the hard-hitting and fleet-fingered Farrugia from continually going for it.)

*For the next two weeks, the Ernesto Cervini Quartet plays an run of Canadian concerts that sadly bypasses Ottawa. The group is at the Rex Jazz and Blues Bar in Toronto tonight (Nov. 7) before heading west, hitting the usual venues and some ones that are new to me in Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C. The details are [here](#).*

PS: Cervini's quartet did play Ottawa's Cafe Paradiso last fall, and in advance of the show, I had a conversation with Frahm, who is as amiable and open as he is musically monstrous. I thought that [our chat](#) was exceptional among my jazz interviews — do check it out if you haven't already.



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