



Bio information: **WADADA LEO SMITH'S ORGANIC**
Title: **HEART'S REFLECTIONS** (Cuneiform Rune 330/331)



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FILE UNDER: JAZZ / IMPROVISATION

"Organic's music is a swirling roar, part fusion and part jazz rock orchestra, like a combination of Burnt Sugar and Frank Zappa's Hot Rats Ensemble." – The Wire, February 2010 cover story

"Organic's music is powerfully electric and electronic in nature; fiery and interactive in character; contemporary, spiritual and politically conscious, its creative energy is heartfelt and connected with the human feeling." – Wadada Leo Smith

Lauded by *Coda* as "one of the most vital musicians on the planet," **Wadada Leo Smith** is a highly regarded trumpeter/composer who has, over the course of five decades in jazz and free music, seldom slackened his prolific pace. If anything, he's been experiencing a creative renaissance of late. On **Cuneiform** alone, he's released five new records in the last seven years—four of which are double-disc sets. His profile has increased, too, thanks to his appearance on the cover of *The Wire* (February 2010) and *Jazziz* (January 2010); as well as the release of the **Tzadik** box set **Wadada Leo Smith: Kabell Years, 1971-1979** (2004), a collection of recordings that were originally released on Smith's **Kabell** label. The **Kabell** box includes a song called "**Ankrasmation**," a composition that shares its name with a notational system invented by Smith. This concept, also known as **Ahkreanvention**, eschews chords and embraces sound qua sound. It remains the foundation of Smith's ever-surprising, ever-expanding oeuvre.

Since the late-1960s, when Smith joined the **Association for the Advancement of Creative Music (AACM)** and made his debut as a composer on **Anthony Braxton's Three Compositions of New Jazz** (1968), he has released more than 30 albums as a leader, and worked with some of the most noteworthy labels in independent jazz (ECM, Impulse!, Black Saint, Tzadik, Nessa, and FMP, to name but a few). The crystal-toned trumpeter has also been given many recent honors, including, but not limited to, a **Fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation** (2009); the **FONT (Festival of New Trumpet Music) Award of Recognition** (2009); and a grant from **Chamber Music America** to compose a large work inspired by the Civil Rights movement (2010's "Ten Freedom Summers").

Smith's latest CD and fifth release for Cuneiform, **Heart's Reflections**, is a bold double-disc set that features **Wadada Leo Smith's Organic**, a predominately electric, fourteen-piece group that is both active and performing at festivals worldwide. In fact, Organic, a band most notable for a lineup marked by four guitarists, just performed a late-March concert in Milano, Italy. In talking about this shred-heavy band with *All About Jazz*, Smith said, "I wanted to create this ensemble with this fantastic horizontal and vertical mash of sound. ... And [I wanted] the music to be experimental and have a beat to it and to have those qualities that young people are interested in." This is the second release by Organic (not to be confused with **Organic Resonance**, an album Smith recorded with Anthony Braxton), and—like Organic's debut, the second half of **Spiritual Dimensions**—it was recorded at the jazz club **Firehouse 12** in New Haven, CT.

In addition to Smith, who plays both acoustic and electric trumpet, the extraordinary lineup on *Heart's Reflections* includes: **Michael Gregory, Brandon Ross, Lamar Smith, and Josh Gerowitz** on guitar; **Skúli Sverrisson** and **John Lindberg** on bass; **Angelica Sanchez** on acoustic and electric piano; **Stephanie Smith** on violin; **Casey Anderson** on alto saxophone; **Casey Butler** on tenor saxophone; **Mark Trayle** and **Charlie Burgin** on laptops; and **Pheeroan akLaff** on drums. This co-ed outfit sizzles and stomps its way through 14 genre-bending tracks (two of which stretch past the twenty minute mark). Though longtime listeners might be surprised by the fierceness of Organic's rhythm section, *Heart's Reflections* is nonetheless marked by the trumpeter's usual touchstones: long sustained notes, occasional clipped phrases, and a tough-to-define playfulness that infuses all of his work.

Coming across like the next evolutionary step after **Miles Davis'** electric era, *Heart's Reflections* is a vibrant set that harkens back to the blues influence of Smith's Mississippi childhood, and looks forward to still-developing realms of noise and electronics. The album fuses a galaxy of influences into a natural and accessible form, offering an ideal entry point into Smith's vast oeuvre. *Heart's Reflections* should appeal to fans of groove-oriented jazz, as well as rock and electronics audiences with a taste for adventure.

Heart's Reflections was preceded, in 2009, by **Spiritual Dimensions**, Smith's fourth Cuneiform release and first to feature Organic. A double-disc set that spotlighted **Golden Quintet** on the first disc and Organic on the second, **Spiritual Dimensions** was the subject of high praise. *All About Jazz* called it "strangely entrancing music" and declared it "one of his finest recordings." *Financial Times* wrote that Smith's playing on **Spiritual Dimensions** "soars." And *BBC Music Magazine* deemed it "superb." Smith and Cuneiform began their fruitful collaboration in the mid-2000s, when the label released two critically acclaimed double-disc sets by **Yo Miles!**, Smith and guitarist **Henry Kaiser**'s tribute to Miles Davis' electric-era output. The **Yo Miles!** albums on Cuneiform—**Sky Garden** (2004) and **Upriver** (2005)—were followed, in 2008, by **Tabligh**, the third release from **Wadada Leo Smith's Golden Quartet**. **Tabligh** received a tremendous response from critics. *Bagatellan* declared it a landmark of free music, stating that, "**Tabligh** is an album that should be on the shelf of anyone with an interest in the past eighty-odd years of trumpet improvisation."

"The strongest way in which one can receive any information is in the most sincere way... The moment a person steps over the threshold into the music space, they should consider that space a ritual space and a unique cultural moment, and leave the other world outside the door....I expect to transform the audience...I expect to be transformed along with them."

– Wadada Leo Smith, interviewed by the *New Haven Advocate* in a preview to Organic's April 2009 performance at Firehouse 12.

For more information, visit Wadada Leo Smith online at: www.wadadaleosmith.com & www.myspace.com/wadadaleosmith

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PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

Digital [High-Resolution / Color] images of **Wadada Leo Smith** are available for download on www.cuneiformrecords.com in the "Press" section.

LEADER BIO:

WADADA LEO SMITH / LEO SMITH / ISHMAEL WADADA LEO SMITH

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One of the most original and important voices in American jazz, **Wadada Leo Smith**, a.k.a. **Ishmael Wadada Leo Smith** and **Leo Smith**, is a trumpet player, multi-instrumentalist, composer, improviser, educator and music theorist/writer. A Mississippi native whose first musical experience was in marching and blues bands, Smith began playing trumpet when he was 12, encouraged by his stepfather, the blues guitarist **Alex Wallace**. After high school, Smith joined the Army, traveling overseas while playing in military bands. Smith moved to Chicago in the 1960s, where he studied at the Sherwood School of Music (1967-9), became a founding member of **AACM (Association or the Advancement of Creative Music)** and played in the **Creative Construction Company** (with **Anthony Braxton**, **Leroy Jenkins**, **Muhal Richard Abrams**, **Richard Davis**, and **Steve McCall**). In the '70s, he moved to New Haven, Connecticut, where he founded a label, **Kabell**, and a band, **New Dalta Ahkri** (Smith, **Oliver Lake**, **Wes Brown**, **Henry Threadgill**, **Anthony Davis**). Smith studied world music at Wesleyan University (1975-6) and independently began to develop and carefully document a unique system of musical notation, called **Ahkreanvention** and later, **Ankhramation**, that would underlay all of Smith's original music.

Since **Creative Music-1.**, his debut under his own name, came out in 1972, Smith has released more than 30 albums either under his own name or his bands' on **ECM**, **Moers**, **Black Saint** and other labels. In addition to his own works, he has worked with numerous other artists, including **Muhal Richard Abrams**, **Carla Bley**, **Anthony Braxton** ("I have never known a time when Leo Smith was not developing something...The man is a genius."), **Marion Brown**, **Jeb Bishop**, **Leroy Jenkins**, **Cecil Taylor**, **Don Cherry**, and **Anthony Davis**, (who called Smith "one of the unsung heroes of American music.") In recent years, having settling in the Los Angeles area in the 1990s, Smith has unleashed a torrent of critically acclaimed releases that are as striking for their diversity as for the purity of artistic vision uniting them all. In 2004, Tzadik released a 4-CD boxed set of Smith's early work, called **The Kabell Years, 1971-79**. Giving it "4.5/5 stars," the *All Music Guide* stated that "This is a monumentally important addition to the recorded library of avant-garde music and should be considered a necessary part of any enthusiasts' shelf." Most recently, Smith has released two new digital-only albums with **Yo Miles!** (There Records, 2010), as well as two new trumpet-drum duets: **America** with **Jack DeJohnette** (Tzadik, 2009) and **The Blue Mountain's Sun Drummer** with **Ed Blackwell** (Kabell, 2010).

Smith has published pamphlets on his music theories and won numerous grants and awards as a composer (Meet the Composer, NEA, etc). His compositions have been performed by numerous contemporary music ensembles, including **Kronos Quartet** and **AACM**. Smith taught at several schools (**U. of New Haven**, **Bard College**, **Woodstock's Creative Music Studio**) in the Northeast prior to moving to California in 1993, as the first person to assume the **Dizzy Gillespie Chair at CalArts** (California Institute of the Arts-Valencia). Currently, Smith is **Director of African American Improvisational Music Program** at CalArts - Valencia. Smith founded the **Creative Music Festival** at CalArts around 1995, and served as its curator over the years. In 2005, he received the **Jazz Journalist Association's Award for Lifetime Achievement in Jazz Education**. And, in 2010, he received a grant from **Chamber Music America** to compose a large work inspired by the Civil Rights movement ("Ten Freedom Summers").

Smith maintains a busy performance schedule, touring worldwide to play with Organic and Golden Quartet, as well as in duos and solo.

For additional information on Wadada Leo Smith:

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- Ed Hazell, "Wadada Leo Smith: Then and Now", *Coda* (COVER STORY), Sept.-Oct. 2004.
- Bill Smith, "Wadada Leo Smith: Then and Now", *Coda* (COVER STORY). Sept.-Oct. 2004.
- Matthew Sumera, "Wadada Leo Smith: The OFN Interview", *One Final Note*, April 2005.
- Piero Scaruffi, "Leo Smith", 2006, www.scaruffi.com/jazz/lsmith.html
- Marc Medwin, "Wadada Leo Smith," *All About Jazz*, May 2009.
- Jeff Jackson, "Wadada Leo Smith's American Music," *Jazziz* (COVER STORY), January 2010.
- Phil Freeman, "In Quest of Space," *The Wire* (COVER STORY), February 2010.
- Lyn Horton, "Wadada Leo Smith: A Vital Life Force," *All About Jazz*, May 2010.
- Vijay Iyer, "5 Expansive Wadada Leo Smith Recordings," *A Blog Supreme/NPR Jazz*, November 2010
- Franz. A. Matzner, "Wadada Leo Smith: The Teacher," *All About Jazz*, March 2011
- Wadada Leo Smith on *All Music Guide*, www.allmusic.com
- Richard Cook (Ed.), Brian Morton (Ed.,) *Penguin's Guide To Jazz*, 8th edition, Penguin Group