

Jazz Journalists Association Jazz Awards **2012 Nominations: Record of the Year: Wadada Leo Smith's Organic, Heart's Reflections (Cuneiform Records)**, *JJA Jazz Awards*, 4/13/2012 <http://www.jjazwards.org/p/2012-nominees.html>

"...This is some of the best of what happened to me on records in 2011. ... Organic...is at once a throwback – building on the aggressive turbulence of Miles Davis' early-Seventies electric impressionism – and contemporary dynamite: a very big band with strings, reeds, laptops and no fewer than four electric guitarists. Everything on the two CDs of *Heart's Reflections* runs way long, to haunting effect with Smith evoking Davis' clean fighting peals with uncanny immediacy over the momentum. ...the music – a modern black-rock *Agharta* – is fine fresh hypnotism."
- David Fricke, "The Best Under-the-Radar Albums of 2011", *Rolling Stone*, December 23, 2011 <http://www.rollingstone.com>

"If you've been complaining that music has lost its epic sweep, boy have I got an album for you. Everything about this two-CD set is big... Stylistically these musical suites wander all over the map but continually lock back into funk grooves that call to mind electric Miles and Ornette's Prime Time, with passages that can be simultaneously dense, chaotic, and danceable. What's particularly appealing about *Heart's Reflections* is the use of contrast: lyrical quiet sections gain power when set off against hi-voltage vamps... **The top-notch personnel...the scope of the music is so broad that everyone from Eno to Prince fans should give a listen.**" - Jeff Wilson, *The Absolute Sound*, December 2011

"...Rhapsody's first-annual Jazz Critics' Poll, wherein 122 national writers voted on their favorite albums of the year in a tradition we're taking on from the Village Voice. ...Record of the Year ... 13. Wadada Leo Smith's Organic, Heart's Reflections (Cuneiform) 74.5 (16)"
- Francis Davis and Tom Hull, "2011 Jazz Critics' Poll Results", *Rhapsody*, January 10, 2012, www.rhapsody.com

"The trumpeter's playing, writing and ability to field-marshal combinations of acoustic and electric instruments come together in another epic two-CD set. ...it is a continuation of Smith's electronic approach in 2009's *Spiritual Dimensions*. ...the power of his personality and vision guarantees the kind of distinctively individual music we get here. ... multiple amplified guitars...improvise freely at the same time, they blend rather than clash. Piano, violin, drums, two alto saxophones and...two laptops enrich Smith's palette. From it, he applies tonal colors, sometimes in flecks, more often in swaths saturated with blues. ..." - Doug Ramsey, *RiffTides*, June 6, 2011, <http://www.artsjournal.com/riffTides/>

"... Smith told me...that this period of music is "so powerful that it could have been written yesterday, or tomorrow." On the basis of...this two-disc helping (his fifth for Cuneiform...), that's emphatically true. ... Smith has long had an investment in traditional forms, and is committed ...creative potential and possibility. **The basic ingredients are stomping grooves, wafting ominous textures, wah-inflected trumpet, and tons of gorgeous keyboard and guitar obbligatos, all coming together in a fabulous array of textures and propulsions and contexts that proves Smith's basic point. The music is hypnotic but not narcoleptic, continually generating innovation and elaboration within the form. ...Heart's Reflections is one of the best from a seriously heavy period of a major artist.**"
- Jason Bivins, *Paris Transatlantic Magazine*, Autumn 2011, <http://www.paristransatlantic.com/>

"... This new double-disk recording of Smith with his Organic band...is arguably the trumpeter's most fully realized musical statement to date.

...*Heart's Reflection* is not only richer than any of the Yo Miles! recordings; the music is also much more varied and expansive than anything Davis did with his various electric bands. The album's long opening track, "Don Cherry's Electric Sonic Garden"...has everything you'd want in an electric jazz-funk workout: a bump 'n' grind beat from drummer Phaoreen akLaff; great fuzz bass; stellar wah-wah trumpet from Smith; and the twin guitars of Michael Gregory and Brandon Ross howling and moaning like amorous beasts. ... **...Smith is the dominant voice throughout... And what a voice it is – short, clipped phrases, lightning-fast runs, legato slurs, long, sustained notes – executed with bravura, inventiveness and confidence.** ... it is a dream... **An impressive tour de force.**" - Bill Tilland, *Option*, June 25, 2011, www.option-magazine.com

"There's a certain strain in American jazz which is like nothing else on Earth. It's a strange **offspring of the free jazz of the Sixties, mingled with a "cosmic" spirituality, and mystical sort of Islam...**

Trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith...embodies this strain... His new album features the 14-piece band Organic... **The band's sound suggests vast distances, with a tinge of something futuristic, but at the same time there's a suggestion of something ancient.**

Often the players come together in vast slow melodies, overlapped to suggest the voice of multitudes. And **floating over it all is the extraordinary trumpet sound of Smith himself, who really is a wonderful player.**

His sound has tremendous emotional weight, as if a seer is speaking wordless messages...

- Ivan Hewett, *The Telegraph*, August 4, 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/>

"... There are long stretches of music that have the feel of Miles Davis circa "Big Fun", the sound replete with chunky rhythm guitars, funky bass lines, pounding drums, Smith's electronically distorted trumpet filling the sound spectrum and more. But there are also pieces that move in unexpected directions... Most impressive are the multiple contributions of **Angelica Sanchez** (acoustic piano, Wuritzer electric piano) and the creative interplay of bassists **John Lindberg** and **Skulli Sverrisson**. It is also good to hear the guitar work of producer **Michael Jackson**... **Like Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis and Dave Douglas, Wadada Leo Smith sounds like himself in all musical situations.** One can get lost i[n] his clarion-call trumpet as well as his forays into electronics while his episodic compositions and intelligent arrangements offer much to the listener who desires a challenge..." - Richard B. Kamins, *Step Tempest*, July 26, 2011, <http://steptempest.blogspot.com>

"The music of Wadada Leo Smith, no matter the setting, is spiritual, mesmerizing, purposeful and often dense...

...Smith seems to be giving us an educated guess where Miles would have taken his band...very few...have the wherewithal like Wadada Leo Smith does to pull this off.

... *Heart's Reflections* is a bigger, badder Organic, too: **fourteen members makes this the largest of small jazz combos.** ...a more focused effort.

...there's no breaking up the stellar mindfunk of that first cut, "Don Cherry's Electric Sonic Garden (for Don Cherry)." ... it's a very fast twenty-one minutes." - S. Victor Aaron, "One Track Mind: Wadada Leo Smith's Organic – "Don Cherry's Electric Sonic Garden" (2011)" *Something Else!*, June 8, 2011, somethingelserreviews.com

"...fusionistas who just can't find the right place to get their Miles Davis Down On The Corner-era vibe on should be right on this..."

Trumpeter Smith's explorations of where jazz/rock/funk and noise coincide will put a smile on their faces and also those of any prog-rockers... The range of feeling, textures and moods conjured up is quite expansive. ... **Heavy listening for a long time to come from a prolific performer who is maintaining ridiculously high calibre work late in his career.** Grade: B+ – Stuart Derdyn, *The Province*, May 30, 2011, blogs.theprovince.com

"... Smith's idea of organic is plugged in: his credit is for "electric trumpet" as well as trumpet; he uses four electric guitarists, two electric bassists; Angelica Sanchez plays Wurlitzer as well as acoustic piano; and he has two laptop credits. Trumpet-led fusion inevitably recalls Miles Davis, but Smith has been there and done that in his Yo! Miles group with Henry Kaiser. **But this is definitely post-Yo!: the mix is far more complex, as is the groove.** ... [B+(***)]" - Tom Hull, *Jazz Prospecting* (CG #27, Part 11), <http://www.tomhull.com>

"Wadada Leo Smith ... has once again brought together a band of electric and acoustic musicians, including four guitarists and two laptop "players," and created music that rolls along without excess. ...

"Silsila," ... opens the second disc... The final two movements of the piece feature the best Smith solo on the whole session. **His tone is loud and crisp, and here he plays with the bright authority of a classical trumpeter. It makes you appreciate both the depth of this composition and proves that Smith ranks high in the pantheon of jazz trumpet players.** ...

...Smith should be commended for leading such a heavy group that can blow freely without ever getting too busy or heavy handed. ... string player[s]...don't step on each other's feet either. ...this clarity isn't merely left to chance. These players are in tune with Smith's vision. ... **...it's easy to lose sense of time in this music, due to its power."**

- Mike Shanley, *Shanleyonmusic*, November 14, 2011, <http://shanleyonmusic.blogspot.com>

"...Heart's Reflections...is a fresh and contemporary take on fusion. ...this album departs greatly from its predecessors. ...the group manages to keep the texture un-cluttered. *Heart's Reflections* has many moments of quiet introspection, and it's less frantic and manic than some of Miles' avant-funk excursions. On the longer pieces the group stretches out... there's plenty of nasty funk, rock, and free jazz too **...if you're into Miles's Live-Evil, Cherry's Brown Rice, Herbie's Mwandishi records, James Blood Ulmer, etc., then you will probably dig Heart's Reflections, a lot."**

- Chris Robinson, "Record Roundup: 6 Discs Worth Checking Out", *Outside Inside Out*, August 25, 2011 <http://outsideinsideout.wordpress.com/>

"Trumpeter and composer Wadada Leo Smith has been on a wonderful creative roll of late, playing everything from post-Miles fusion to fragile acoustic projects. On this two compact disc set, he draws from all of that experience and imbues it with his deep spirituality and unique approach to music to develop a very successful project. The band is large, and shifts constantly, allowing for a large palette of musical possibilities to draw from. Opening the album is the extraordinary "Don Cherry Electric Sound Garden"... Grinding with a heavy beat and wah trumpet strutting over a pulsing bass and drums, the performance is a dramatic demonstration of the strength and authority of the musicians involved. **... This is really an extraordinary piece of work that Smith has released, rivaling anything he has done over the course of his lengthy career. Drawing upon his own vast experience and that of the masters he has followed, he has developed unique insight into the nature of improvised music that is on full display on this triumphant album."**

- Tim Niland, *Music and More*, May 27, 2011 jazzandblues.blogspot.com

"The **gem out of Cuneiform's recent jazz-related releases, a monument of creative, contemporary and groovy fusion jazz.** Here, Organic ... The heart of this double CD set is the 60-minute, 11-part suite "Heart's Reflection," a work dense in writing but uplifting in its solos. The rest of the album consists in homages to Don Cherry, Tom Morrison and Leroy Jenkins – "Leroy Jenkins's Air Steps"...concludes the album with a roar: infectious groove and a stunning sequence of solos, including a ripper from guitarist Brandon Ross."

- François Couture, *Monsieur Delire*, May 26, 2011, blog.monsieurdelire.com

"... Smith's trademark blazing rasps, stuttering rips and smears of sound, skilfully complemented by sustained, spearing notes over drummer Pheeroan akLaff's tumblingly emphatic precision and the solid, often downright hypnotic bass playing of John Lindberg and Skúli Sverrisson, will hold strong appeal for all those UK listeners who have latched on to bands such as Dog Soup and Fraud in recent times, but Organic's pleasantly galumphing solidity, stamina and energy...are counterbalanced by a judicious deployment of electronics that ranges from ethereal, floating passages harking back to *In a Silent Way* to unequivocally new-millennium laptop-produced soundscaping.

...this latest roilingly intense offering should appeal to rock and cutting-edge jazz enthusiasts alike."

- Chris Parker, *LondonJazz*, November 2011, <http://londonjazz.blogspot.com>

"Both tourists and locals are in New York absorbing the wealth of jazz that swamps the month of June...so voila: 50 tunes to chew on while moving from one jazz show to another.

31. The Dhikr of Radiant Hearts, Wadada Leo Smith, *Heart's Reflections* (Cuneiform)

The big-hearted trumpeter is a no-show on this section of his latest suite, giving way to Angelica Sanchez's poised ramblings and John Lindberg's adroit rumbles. It's a poetic space walk, and if you're jonesing for Smith when it subsides, just hang a sec: he comes in to scald on "The Majestic Way." ..."

- Jim Macnie, "50 Songs To Get You Through NYC's Jazz Month". *Lament For A Straight Line*, June 10, 2011, <http://lamentforastraightline.wordpress.com>

"...where Miles was still molding funk and jazz, Smith has taken those ideas one step further. ...the music is funky, anarchistic and forward-looking. Wadada Leo Smith's newest album with one of his three main groups Organic, is entitled *Heart's Reflection*. It's...**one of the best and exciting records from Smith in years.**

... "Don Cherry's Electric Sonic Garden", Smith details a groove that is both funky, exploratory and filled with improvised moments. His group Organic uses of electronics, guitars and piano give the album an **out of this world vibe (in vein of Sun Ra)**. But Smith keeps the groove in flow ... **Smith's playing is superb throughout.** ...

"The Majestic Way" and "Certainty" both have moments where **not only Smith but his bandmates** (in particular, Angelica Sanchez (electric piano), Josh Gerowitz (guitar) and Pheeroan AkLaff (drums)) **really move into interstellar regions with their performances. It's funky in a Big Fun, Bitches Brew kind of way but still wholly original.** ...

... **In the vast catalogue of Wadada Leo Smith, Heart's Reflection is an album that deserves your undivided attention.**"

- Stephan Moore, *JazzWrap*, June 16, 2011, <http://jazzwrap.blogspot.com>

"Don Cherry's Electric Sonic Garden' opens with the funky, loping half-shuffle of Pheeroan akLaff's drums and John Lindberg's bizarrely fuzzed-out electric acoustic bass. **Taking a few cues from "Agartha"-period Miles, this surreal 20-plus minute jam is a gripping sonic adventure...**

The remainder of the first disc is ...the monumental 'Heart's Reflections... Loaded with thematic material, extended improvisations, and electronically enhanced avant-funk, there's nevertheless a palpable sense of narrative and musical logic. ...

The Suite continues on the second disc... 'The Well: From Bitter to Fresh Sweet Water, Part 1.' ...a remarkable, shimmering slab of avant-funk by the trio of Smith, Sverrisson, and akLaff. ...none...play out of any recognizable 'funk' bag. It's all quite understated. There are no quotes, no licks – just pure expression. ...

The final track... 'Leroy Jenkins' Air Steps' starts out as a swirling maelstrom of free improvisation that settles down into a rocking funk groove reminiscent of early '70s Santana. ...different groupings of musicians improvise over and within the structure... **To be able to take and hold someone's attention for one full-length CD is a real accomplishment. ..."Heart's Reflection"...is one of those rare 2-CD sets that contain zero musical filler. ... Epic, and highly recommended. ... Four Stars"**

- Dave Wayne, *JazzReview.com* November 10, 2011, <http://www.jazzreview.com/>

"... Passages of collective interplay explore color and texture as much as melodic or rhythmic development, merging into a seething hyperactive stew of up to four guitars, along with a brace of laptops and saxophones. **Calm at the center of the storm, Smith is simply majestic...**"

-John Sharpe, "Best Releases of 2011", *Jazzopolitan*, www.jazzopolitan.com

"... Wadada Leo Smith seems to have a lot in common with the late Miles Davis. His music is transformative, and he appears to be uncompromisingly determined about selecting the best musicians for his band; he eschews musical clichés. Like '*electric Miles*' he has positioned himself firmly on the cutting edge of jazz improvisation as a genre changer... His artistic output is prodigious... His music is imbued with fetching spirituality. ...he is also a damn good trumpet player.

His new CD release (two discs): "Heart's Reflections" further cements his living legacy. ...

Wadada Leo Smith's Organic Heart's Reflections is awe-inspiring, candidly raw music, with a formidable, determined electric attitude, that must make Charles Augustin de Coulomb antic in his grave. It is a sustained lightning strike of world energy, descending on a groove, toting a beat, connected to human feeling. Apart from the infectious beat, Smith's music gains automatic attention because of the sheer complexity and mixture of instrumental sounds out of which his trumpet flows like Armstrong's...

...the band is an eclectic mix of musical tastes with a mercurial emotional character; it can be busy, enigmatic, yet full of cool surprises. It can growl fiercely like a pride of hungry lions...or it can go 'way, way out'...with Smith in the lead...

In terms of innovation, vision, and forward thinking, Wadada Leo Smith's Organic: Heart's Reflections 2011 appears to show striking artistic parallels with Miles Davis' 1948 landmark (now classic) album "Birth of the Cool." Both are nonpareil trumpeters fronting large ensembles, consisting of young, versatile, cutting-edge musicians, hungry to explore new territory; and each with strong leadership qualities. ... Hopefully, Smith will remain beyond classification and continue to reprise the free music of this exceptionally exciting band."

– Cameron Jackman, *Jazz Music*, August 2, 2011, www.jazmuzic.com

"**The astonishing 20-minute opening track** might be called "Don Cherry's Electric Sonic Garden", but it's the wheedling tone and furious backbeat of the late Miles Davis that veteran free-jazz trumpeter Smith makes you think of most.

Four electric guitarists among an ensemble of 14, with two laptop operatives squiggling away. ...**Smith has made electric jazz sound dangerous again.**" - Phil Johnson, *The Independent*, October 16, 2011, <http://www.independent.co.uk>

"...this fantastic set of music that takes me back to sessions like "Bitches' Brew", albeit with a true 21st-Century twist. ...the two-part "The Well: From Bitter to Fresh Sweet Water"...got my vote for favorite... it's got everything a jazz fan could want, & wraps you right in! **I give this 2-CD marvel a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an "EQ" (energy quotient) rating of 4.99. ...I also give it the "PICK" of this issue for "best epic jazz journey"!** ..." - Dick Metcalf, *IMPROVIJAZZATION NATION magazine*, Issue #117, <http://rotcodzaj.com>

"... **this isn't some warmed over fusion from yesterday.** Pheeroan AkLaff's bass drum rings out like a barrel. ... He plays rock-funk with all the complexity of his swing and freetime playing. Complex, varied, yet pushing the feel ahead...

This is electric music that dares to be art music. It's miles beyond a Miles tribute band. It's a Wadada's music band. Free electric post-funk? That's one label... there is an evolved group sound that brings fascination. Wadada has gotten a bead on where to take the music and he is taking it there.

Probably the most important electric band working in the music today..."

-Grego Applegate Edwards, *Gapplegate Guitar and Bass Blog*, August 3, 2011, gapplegateguitar.blogspot.com

"...again a 5-star album... again fabulous music, very much in the vein of his previous album "Spiritual Dimensions". ... Is it free jazz? Is it fusion? ... No, no, no ... What is it then? ... **It is funky, hypnotic, tribal, spiritual, uplifting** ... with pumping basses, soaring trumpets, shredding guitars, polypolyrhythmic drums. ... What is then so special about it? ... **The overall sound, the variation between slow spiritual moments and almost danceable uptempo pieces, the instrumental prowess, the interplay, the unbelievable feeling to be one with it all,** because it resonates so deeply with everything that feels true and warm and human. ... **Is it that good? ... Once you're in it, you don't want it to stop. ... [5 stars]"**

- Stef Gijssels, *Free Jazz*, May 22, 2011, <http://freejazz-stef.blogspot.com>

“To call Wadada Leo Smith as national treasure might seem like I’m pushing it, but for the...thirty-plus years... Smith has carved out a legacy that is both daring and healing. He has made, in the truest sense, spiritual music, “spiritual” in the sense that it was used by Free Jazz musicians, and by those in his path in Sufism. “Heart’s Reflections” is one of his more laid-back, fun records. It is a two-CD fusion record with structure but guts. ...Smith explores rock, free improv, smooth soul and occasional forays into the mystical.

...a lot of ground is covered here. ...Smith’s horn is the knot that binds, as his sweet tone on “Spiritual Wayfares,” a kind of holy lounge tune, and on the transcendent “The Shaykh, as far as Humaythira”. But the guitars give him a run for his money on the harsh “Certainty”... The most out track is the quiet, searching ambient “The Black Hole...” ...

“Heart’s Reflections” is the latest in a songbook of incredible depth and power. Wadada Leo Smith deserves more attention; Cuneiform are doing their part to promote this master...”

-Mike Wood, *Foxy Digitalis*, May 31, 2011

“...at its core, this document is muscular and decidedly physical. Witness Smith's strident blasts and guitarists Brandon Ross and Michael Gregory's glorious wailing on "Certainty," a powerhouse piece. There are moments of stateliness too... Even with a heavy-on-electronics, 14-piece group, Smith's music is consistently focused and expressive.” - Glen Hall. *Exclaim!*, Apr 15 2011, <http://exclaim.ca>

“Jazz’s avant-garde can be a forbidding place for listeners. But Southern California trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith, a lion of the avant garde for more than four decades, is a sound artist who invites audiences in. ...”

- Andrew Gilbert, *The California Report*, Aug 12-14, 2011, www.californiareport.org

“...meriting extra attention for their deep ambition, as well as their sheer musical accomplishment.

... 3. *Heart’s Reflections*, Wadada Leo Smith: ... This double-disc is music from Smith’s guitar-heavy, thuddingly funky band Organic, and it **brings together two important parallel streams in jazz that have had, strangely, a greater influence across popular music than they have with their original families: Miles Davis electric period and Don Cherry as musical griot. ...jazz is not a set of tunes, it’s a complete style of playing music, and electric Miles was about as jazz as jazz ever gets. And so is Heart’s Reflections, the best so far of Smith’s exploration of Miles legacy** ...As Smith explained to me...it’s...an expressive idea that comes out of the blues, but needs as little of strict form and genre as Skip James, Robert Johnson, Son House and Blind Lemon Jefferson did. And that’s where Don Cherry comes in. The sound of this music is full of the colors of *Bitches Brew*, *In a Silent Way* and *Jack Johnson*, but **Smith’s wide-ranging phrasing, ear and ability to gather together what seem to be disparate musical elements into a natural sounding whole is straight out of Cherry’s gift for speaking in musical language across cultures and idioms. Smith incorporates that implicitly, making this a true ‘world-music’ record of freely played, strictly composed, traditional, open-ended electric jazz. Almost two hours of music, each second casting a spell. An awesome record. ...”**

- George Grella, “2011 Year’s Best Jazz”, *The Big City*, December 23, 2011, <http://thebigcityblog.com>

“[4.5 stars out of 5] ... Organic's music is superficially similar to that band's, but with a much greater degree of abstraction...and a generally more meditative feel that's likely rooted in the leader's deep and constant spiritual questing. Tracks carry dedications to Don Cherry and Smith's AACM peer, violinist Leroy Jenkins, as well as Toni Morrison and Shaykh Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili, the founder of the Shadhili order of Sufi Muslims... So while the opening "Don Cherry's Electric Sonic Garden" is a 20-minute funk jam, **the two-part "The Dhikr of Radiant Hearts" feels more like Davis' "He Loved Him Madly" crossed with John Coltrane's "Love Consequences Serenity" from Meditations. ...there's not a moment here that feels ill-conceived or superfluous. This is a masterwork by one of the great heroes of American avant-garde jazz.”**

- Phil Freeman, *All Music Guide*, 2011, www.allmusic.com

“To assess Wadada Leo Smith's contribution to...his chosen instrument—the trumpet—as his sole claim to fame would be touching just the tip of the proverbial iceberg of his importance in the scheme of contemporary music. Firstly, there is a bottomless depth to him that rivals that of musicians such as Yusef Lateef and Adam Rudolph. His development of "Ankhrasmation"—profound graphic musical scores...have grown organically from his Afro-American roots. ...his music rises from a wellspring of universal spiritualism and...appears to place the highest importance of being an artiste to listening to the voice of The Divine One...

... Smith has crafted his latest opus, *Heart’s Reflections*—a large, majestic score in and out of the spaces of his musical universe. ... **At its center is the confluence of several guitars, led by Michael Gregory and Brandon Ross, and the glue that holds it all together is Smith...**

Smith draws everything to himself like a solar figure. He ignites the music... The meditative nature of this album begins...when the trumpeter pays tribute to another trumpeter, who was also known for his own soul-searching music. ...

...“Heart’s Reflections: Splendors of Light and Purification.”... is the centerpiece of the work; a sprawling, yet tightly controlled piece that highlights collective improvisation at its finest. ... All of this is superbly controlled by Smith's piercing trumpet...

Two more sketches—one dedicated to the poet and novelist, Toni Morrison; the other to AACM alum Leroy Jenkins—are achingly beautiful and complete the ponderous beauty of this **landmark album, from an artiste whose profound musical spiritualism is spectacularly matched by his unbridled virtuosity as a trumpeter.”** - Raul D’Gama Rose, *All About Jazz*, www.allaboutjazz.com

“Wadada Leo Smith is currently making some of the most distinctive music on the planet; its expressive depth, as exemplified by *Heart’s Reflections*, seemingly born not merely of one lifetime, but of several. The trumpeter’s means of expression...is now purged of all excess, resulting in something else, deeply enriched with clarity of thought and execution. ...

...The music is, by turns, meditative and harshly dissonant... When wired funk comes to dominate proceedings at around the 6:20 mark, Smith's long-term fascination with Miles Davis' electric music from the first half of the 1970s also comes to the fore, but put through Smith's prism to emerge as something distinct in its own right.

...with the passing of time, Smith is becoming an ever more absorbent musical sponge... the reverential "The Dhikr of Radiant Hearts Part II" is enhanced, in no small part, by Angelica Sanchez's electric piano, before the specter of Miles Davis looms again briefly... usurped by a meditative air that comes not merely from Smith's obviously deep spirituality, but as the result of collective in-the-moment thinking, which provokes a quiet sense of wonder.

Coming back to *Heart’s Reflections* for the sheer listening experience is also a spiritual experience in itself. ...it is in some respects merely a starting point for adventures limited only by the imagination. Truly this is music for the ages.”

- Nic Jones, *All About Jazz*, September 21, 2011, www.allaboutjazz.com

“... **Organic**...is positioned to take Yo Miles! one step beyond with an electric sound **that begins with the blues and funk, then evolves into modern composition.**

The discs open and close with two 20-plus minute performances. Together, "Don Cherry's Electric Sonic Garden" and "Leroy Jenkins's Air Steps" showcase Smith's simple-to-complex perspective. ...

Between the bookends, Smith's music pilots the music's evolution... He presents the spiritual nature of Organic, playing off drummer Pheeroan akLaff's soloing on "The Dhikr Of Radiant Hearts, Pt. I," and pairing pianist Angelica Sanchez with bassist John Lindberg on "Pt. II."

Smith also updates the Milesian electric sound with two laptop computer artists, Mark Trayle and Charlie Burgin, who add eerie and ethereal sounds to "Ritual Purity And Love, Pt. I" and "Toni Morrison: The Black Hole (Sagittarius A)/Conscience And Epic Memory." **Plenty of jazz funk and blues/rock are sprinkled into these 14 tracks, to satisfy the groove, but at its heart, Organic was planted to sprout some adventure.**

- Mark Corroto, *All About Jazz*, May 22, 2011, www.allaboutjazz.com

“With *Heart's Reflections*, Smith extends the palette of the Davis discs by incorporating more thematic fonts and expanding the borders of the arrangements. **His structures are bold and colorful...**

The two-CD set is book-ended by tributes to Don Cherry and Jenkins. ...

Smith transposes the title track across two suites into which he immerses an ocean of perception. ... His stylistic approach is lucid both in concept and in execution...

Smith proves once again that his kinship with creativity is most rewarding.”

-Jerry D'Souza, *All About Jazz*, August 11, 2011, www.allaboutjazz.com

“New off the presses are CDs from ...trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith's adventurous contemporary jazz-fusion ensemble Organic. ...”

- Gerry Koster, “New releases, new re-issues and Wadada Leo Smith's Organic.” *ABC CLASSIC FM: Something old, something new..* October 21, 2011

“... This is his fifth release for Cuneiform Records and after listening to *Heart's Reflections* it would seem to be a marriage made in heaven. ...this is a pretty tough CD to categorize. First and foremost this is a jazz record although there is so much more... Ambient, minimalism, electronics, blues, funk, and rock are all part of the equation. ...

...at times the band really rips up the soundscape like in the opening...epic "Don Cherry's Electric Sonic Garden". Lots of experimental sounds, off kilter electric rhythms and biting lead guitar together with Smith's avant-garde trumpet flourishes makes for a real mind bender. Later on a sprinkling of piano is inundated by fuzzed out guitar rhythms and heavy bass riffs.

...**fans of Kenny G need not apply.** ... [3.5 stars]” - Jon Neudorf, Sea of Tranquility, <http://www.seaoftranquility.org>, November 24, 2011

“... 7. Wadada Leo Smith's Organic *Heart's Reflections*... The great AACM trumpeter/composer **revisits and reconceives Miles Davis' '70s electric period on a double-disc set, backed by an ensemble of young all-stars who offer a fresh and combustible take on funk-rock-jazz fusion.** ...” - Shaun Brady, “Top Jazz Albums of 2011” *Philadelphia City Paper*, December 15, 2011, www.citypaper.net

“The jewel case holding the two discs of *Heart's Reflections* from Wadada Leo Smith's Organic sports a simple cover image...

Open up the case and the visual information explodes. ... The three page bi-folded liner notes...exhibit additional portions of Smith scores and...information, spelling out who solos when in each piece and where they are identifiable in the stereo channel field. ...

... The complete sound of the instruments spans a range of extraordinary balance...

Throughout the performance, a distinct pattern arises of conversation between clear-cut solo and duo presentations over the landscape of the “collective” sound. **Smith's trumpet is both the grounding component and the initiator for improvisation.** ...

The titles of the pieces refer to Smith's experience: from his practice of the Sufi tradition to his metaphorical appreciation of nature to his nods to writer Toni Morrison, trumpeter Don Cherry, and violinist LeRoy...”

- Lyn Horton, *The Paradigm for Beauty*, May 2011, <http://lynhorton.blogspot.com/2011/05/normal-0-false-false-false-en-us-x-none.html>

“...**Organic here stretch out to fill the temporal space, and they let in a good deal of much-needed light and shade in the process.** ...

Disc one, track two gets the album's centrepiece suite, full title “Heart's Reflections: Splendors of Light and Purification... Smith would remain listenable at any length over just about any backing...real connection with Don Cherry... Sufism is surely central to Smith's philosophy, and that's always worth bearing in mind when considering his music. ...

... The ten-minute long “Toni Morrison: The Black Hole (Sagittarius A*)...is quite an interesting piece... the body of the piece is an affectingly hesitant feature for Angelica Sanchez... When the ensemble kick back in the vibe is funkier, with guitarist Michael Gregory soloing extensively, then an atmospheric coda cools things down for a brief statement by the leader, signing off; a final **stamp of authority from a band leader who knows he's bought everything together nicely this time around.** [4 stars]”

- Tim Owen, *The Jazz Mann*, August 21, 2011, <http://www.thejazzmann.com>

“... Here are my 50 favourite jazz CDs of 2011. the ones I liked the best.

[#]35 Wadada Leo Smith's Organic *Heart's Reflections*... The trumpeter continues to mine the spiritual depths while maintaining a distinctly funky feel. ... While Smith will never really escape the electric Miles soundalike tag, he does it so well, and brings that atmosphere so expertly into the 21st century, we end up not really caring ...”

- Peter Bacon, “Festive 50”, *The Jazz Breakfast*, <http://thejazzbreakfast.com>

“... Also recently out on the Cuneiform label is Smith's considerably more electric, aggressive and compositionally-oriented *Heart's Reflections* double cd with his Organic band... Smith will be giving both of these bands a workout along with his Golden Quartet, Golden Quintet and Silver Orchestra as he celebrates his 70th birthday at the new Roulette space in Brooklyn....

- Alan Young, “Wadada Leo Smith Does It Again”, *Lucid Culture*, December 13, 2011, <http://lucidculture.wordpress.com>