



Bio information: **WADADA LEO SMITH**

Title: **AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS** (Cuneiform Rune 430/431) Format: **2xCD / Digital** Release Date: **October 14, 2016**

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Legendary composer and trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith creates a new masterwork inspired by the country's most stunning landscapes

The epic *America's National Parks*, out October 14 on Cuneiform, features Smith's newly expanded Golden Quintet

"Smith uses his magisterial instrumental voice, his inspirational leadership and his command of classical, jazz and blues forms to remind us of what has gone down and what's still happening." –Bill Meyer, *DownBeat's 80 Coolest Things in Jazz Today*

"A trumpeter and composer of penetrating insight." –Nate Chinen, *The New York Times*

With *America's National Parks*, visionary composer and trumpeter **Wadada Leo Smith** offers his latest epic collection, a six-movement suite inspired by the scenic splendor, historic legacy, and political controversies of the country's public landscapes. Writing for his newly expanded **Golden Quintet**, Smith crafts six extended works that explore, confront and question the preserved natural resources that are considered the most hallowed ground in the U.S. – and some that should be.

The two-CD *America's National Parks* will be released on October 14 on **Cuneiform Records**, shortly before Smith's 75th birthday in December. It arrives, coincidentally, in the midst of celebrations for the centennial of the **National Park Service**, which was created by an act of Congress on August 25, 1916. The spark for the project, however, came from two places: Smith's own research into the National Park system, beginning with Yellowstone, the world's first national park; and Ken Burns' 12-hour documentary series *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*.

"The idea that **Ken Burns** explored in that documentary was that the grandeur of nature was like a religion or a cathedral," Smith says. "I reject that image because the natural phenomenon in creation, just like man and stars and light and water, is all one thing, just a diffusion of energy. My focus is on the spiritual and psychological dimensions of the idea of setting aside reserves for common property of the American citizens."

His 28-page score for *America's National Parks* was penned for his **Golden Quintet**, a fresh reconfiguration of the quartet that's been a keystone of his expression for the last 16 years. Pianist **Anthony Davis**, bassist **John Lindberg** and drummer **Pheeroan akLaff** are joined by cellist **Ashley Walters**, affording the composer and bandleader new melodic and coloristic possibilities. "The cello as a lead voice with the trumpet is magnificent," Smith says, "but when you look at the possibilities for melodic formation with the trumpet, the cello, the piano and the bass, that's paradise for a composer and for a performer. My intent was to prolong or enhance the vitality of the ensemble to live longer."

That's an enticing prospect given the vigor and daring on bold display throughout *America's National Parks*. Where many composers would be seduced into romantic excess by the sweeping vistas and majestic panoramas of Yellowstone's grand waterfalls or Kings Canyon's towering redwoods, Smith takes a far more investigative and expansive view, with inventive and complex scores that prompt stunning improvisations from his ensemble. In fact, he has yet to visit many of the parks paid homage in the pieces, opting instead for thorough historical research.

"You don't really need to visit a park to write about a park," Smith insists. "Debussy wrote 'La Mer,' which is about the sea, and he wasn't a seafaring person. I would defend his right to do that, and I would contend that 'La Mer' is a masterpiece that clearly reflects his psychological connection with the idea of the sea."

The *idea* of the parks, rather than their physical and geographical beauty, is central to Smith's conception for this music. In its marrying of natural landmarks and political challenges it can be traced back to both of the composer's most recent epic masterpieces, *The Great Lakes* and especially *Ten Freedom Summers*. "It became a political issue for me because the people that they set up to control and regulate the parks were politicians," Smith says. "My feeling is that the parks should be independent of Congress and organized around an independent source who has no political need to be reelected. So it's a spiritual/psychological investigation mixed with the political dynamics."

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Smith's suite also takes inventive liberties with the definition of a "national park;" half of its inspirations aren't, technically speaking, considered as such. The album opens with "New Orleans: The National Culture Park," which argues that the entire Crescent City deserves to be recognized for its influential contributions to American history and culture. "New Orleans was the first cultural center in America and therefore it produced the first authentic American music," Smith says.

The second piece, "Eileen Jackson Southern, 1920-2002: A Literary National Park," takes an even broader view, suggesting that the African-American musicologist, author and founder of the journal *The Black Perspective in Music*, to which Smith has contributed, should be honored for her efforts to document a musical common ground shared by all Americans. Another piece represents the "Deep and Dark Dreams" of the Mississippi River, which Smith calls "a memorial site which was used as a dumping place for black bodies by hostile forces in Mississippi. I use the word 'dark' to show that these things are buried or hidden, but the body itself doesn't stay hidden; it floats up."

The other three pieces are based on more conventionally recognized national parks: Yellowstone, which became the first place in the world so designated in 1872; Sequoia & Kings Canyon, whose trees Smith marvels at as some of the largest and oldest living things on the planet; and Yosemite, which contains striking glaciers and some of the deepest lakes in the world.

America's National Parks arrives at a time of prolific imagination and universal renown for the composer. Earlier this year Smith, part of the first generation of musicians to come out of Chicago's AACM (Association for the Advancement of Creative Music), was the recipient of a **2016 Doris Duke Artist Award** and an honorary doctorate from CalArts. In March ECM released *a cosmic rhythm with each stroke*, a duo recording with pianist **Vijay Iyer**.

While these preserved landscapes offer the inspiration of powerful natural beauty, Smith's always open-minded view of the world leads him to find that same inspiration wherever he is. "Every concrete house is from nature," he says. "Every plastic airplane that flies 300 people across the ocean comes out of nature. Every air conditioner conditions a natural piece of air. I think that the human being is constantly enfolded in organic nature and constructed nature, so I'm constantly inspired, inside the house or outside the house."

For more information on Wadada Leo Smith:

www.wadadaleosmith.com – [www.twitter.com/WadadaLeoSmith](https://twitter.com/WadadaLeoSmith) – www.cuneiformrecords.com

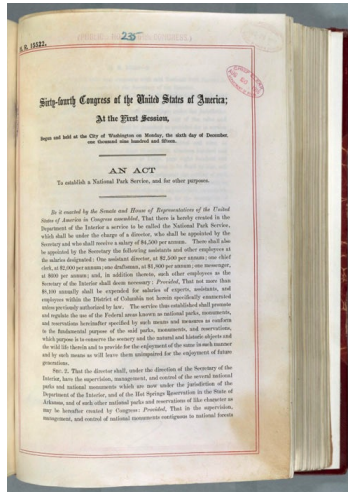
PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS: WADADA LEO SMITH

Digital [High-Resolution] images are available on the *Wadada Leo Smith* artist page @ www.cuneiformrecords.com



2016 is the 100th Anniversary of the National Park Service

"The national parks represent an idea born in this country, as uniquely American as the Declaration of Independence and just as radical: that the most magnificent and sacred places in our nation should be preserved, not for royalty or the rich, but for everyone." - Ken Burns & Dayton Duncan



An Act to Establish a National Park Service, 8/25/1916.
(General Records of the U.S. Government, National Archives)

On August 25th, 1916, the **Organic Act** was signed into power by President **Woodrow Wilson**, the 28th President of the United States, creating the **National Park Service** **“to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner ... as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”** The idea of creating National Parks - setting aside land to be owned by the American people in perpetuity, for the public's pleasure and national pride - was an American innovation. The first example of this dates back to 1872, when the US federal government under President **Ulysses S. Grant** designated **Yellowstone** as a "public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people," creating the first and oldest National Park in the world. The concept of national parks spread worldwide as the US designated additional parks and other nations began to establish their own. The **1916 Organic Act** ensured the future of America's National Parks by creating a special federal bureau under the **U.S. Department of the Interior** to be their stewards, and to manage and preserve them.

The **National Archives** in Washington DC displayed the **Organic Act of 1916** in a **special exhibit** throughout August 2016. Other celebrations honoring the **National Parks Centennial (National Park Service Centennial)** are being held across the U.S. through 2016. **For more info**, please see: **National Park Service** (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/centennial/index.htm>) and **National Park Foundation** (<http://www.nationalparks.org/our-work/celebrating-100-years-service>)

The National Park Service is overseen by the **U.S. Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks**.

Info on the Organic Act & National Parks from:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Park_Service_Organic_Act
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_park - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Park_Service

***“The national parks are more than landmarks, monuments, and territories,
more than mountains, forests, lakes, and geologic wonders.
They represent a piece of the American soul.” - Edwin Bernbaum***

Cuneiform Records' release of **Wadada Leo Smith's America's National Parks** auspiciously coincides with the 2016 National Parks Centennial celebrations. **Wadada Leo Smith** is one of America's leading composers and trumpeters and one of the most respected creative musicians in the world. His recordings and performances have been acclaimed by the international music press, and the **Ankhrasmation** scores he creates for some music are now in the art world's spotlight, currently exhibited at the **Hammer Museums' Made in L.A. 2016** exhibit and lauded with a **2016 Mohn Award**. Smith's prior release on Cuneiform was **Ten Freedom Summers**, a four-disc set celebrating the **American Civil Rights Movement**, for which he was named one of the 3 finalists for the **2013 Pulitzer Prize for Music**. **America's National Parks** follows in the musical, conceptual/political and spiritual footsteps of **Ten Freedom Summers**, continuing Smith's dedication to celebrating America's best ideas, most monumental achievements, and most noble ideals.

"My focus is on the... idea of setting aside reserves for common property of the American citizens: those who have passed on before, those who are here in the present, and those who will come in the future. The...collective notion about common property, inheritance, longevity, transformation, and sustaining beauty down the line..."

-Wadada Leo Smith

WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT

Wadada Leo Smith *Ten Freedom Summers*

One of **NPR's** Top 50 Albums of 2012

Included on over 70 Best of 2012 lists

International Musician of the Year — Musica Jazz Magazine

Musician of the Year — New York City Jazz Record

Musician of the Year and Album of the Year — 2012 El Intruso Creative Music Critics Poll

"*Ten Freedom Summers* was as striking a display of his expansive vision and his vitality. He still plays trumpet as he always has: with little vibrato and a tone that can be either boldly declarative or soft to the point of breaking... Mr. Smith had made his own statement through instrumental music. And it sounded complete."

— **Larry Blumenfeld, *Wall Street Journal***

"Five stars. Although there are many outstanding recordings in Smith's canon, it's hard to avoid calling this his masterpiece."

— **Barry Witherden, *BBC Music Magazine***

"A staggering achievement, with the dramatic sweep of the trumpeter's writing... It merits comparison to Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* in sobriety and reach."

— **Francis Davis, *Rhapsody Jazz Critics Poll***

"Whether you put these dates on your 'jazz' or 'classical' calendar—or even if you just place it on your 'mind-bending art' calendar—consider Smith's Roulette performances among the most important concerts in New York this season."

— **Seth Colter Walls, *Village Voice***

"Mississippi-born jazz composer Wadada Leo Smith has mastered the art of omission, splicing his most dazzling phrases with dramatic pauses and mysterious silences... During a spectacular piece titled 'September 11, 2001,' Iyer's sparkling Rhodes work was countered by Lindberg's liquid bass lines... All together, the quartet played with an elegance that transcended the chaos of that day."

— **Chris Richards, *The Washington Post***

"For all the noble efforts made over the decades to effectively merge the worlds of jazz and classical music, most often the fruits of the labors remain stuck in the 'noble effort' category. But there are blissful exceptions, a list to which we can now add Wadada Leo Smith's ambitious five-hour, civil rights-surveying *Ten Freedom Summers*... His magnum opus ... Hope, anger, abstraction and grand aesthetic ambition come to bear in Smith's inspirational work, bolstered by the charge of the new."

— **Josef Woodard, *Los Angeles Times***

"There are ambitious works, and then there is trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith's *Ten Freedom Summers*... The sound is never less than widescreen. You won't find any vamp sessions or alternating solos in Smith's interpretation of jazz — like the history he's reprising, it only moves forward."

— **Otis Hart, *NPR***

"Five stars. Enormously rewarding, like mid-period Miles Davis playing Ligeti."

— **Phil Johnson, *The Independent UK***

"The hour-long excerpt that Smith was allowed to play at the Pritzker proved more gripping, concise and ingeniously shaped than the recording of 'Ten Freedom Summers' suggests. A master at uttering profound truths with bracing dissonance, stripped-down musical gestures and striking contrasts of instrumental color, Smith presided over music of searing expressive power. Even if you didn't know that 'Ten Freedom Summers' grapples with our nation's struggles over civil rights, this music conveyed tremendous visceral and intellectual impact."

— **Howard Reich, *Chicago Tribune***

"Four stars. Smith's playing runs the gamut from slow-bubbling daubs to stark, keening lines, and its force belies the old saw that age is unkind to brass players' chops."

— **Bill Meyer, *DownBeat***

"It is, without a doubt, his most monumental [work]. It is a piece of music rich in emotional depth, nuance and historical scope.... The music was highly emotive, often somber and elegiac..."

— **Aaron Leitko, *Washington Post***

"Four stars. Smith's brash and plangent trumpet and freewheeling improv from his Golden Quintet merges with a written score delivered by the nine-member Southwest Chamber Music ensemble. Full of melodrama, pathos and hope, it is the veteran trumpeter's defining statement."

— **Mike Hobart, *Financial Times***

"Seamlessly blends jazz, classical and improvisational styles... Compositions ripple with dramatic melodies, shimmering textures, galvanizing rhythms and empathic interplay. This isn't some musty, historical song cycle, but vital and surprising music."

— **Jeff Jackson, *Jazziz***

"Four stars. That mystically inclined trumpeter and composer Wadada Leo Smith has finally produced his magnum opus, a four-hour meditation on defining moments in the Civil Rights movement."

— **Ivan Hewett, *Daily Telegraph***

"If one had to answer quickly what work will matter most this year in American music (as if matters of mattering arose with some regularity), Wadada Leo Smith's *Ten Freedom Summers* would trip readily to the tongue."

— **Stuart Broomer, *Point of Departure***

"This may as well turn out to be the most challenging (and emotionally rewarding) release of 2012."

— **Bret Saunders, *Denver Post***

"The music of *Ten Freedom Summers* suite is stirringly beautiful in its own right... Manages to pay tribute to the Civil Rights Movement in a wholly original, wordless way that also holds up as an astounding aesthetic achievement." — **Michael Casper, *Oxford American***

"His magnum opus, as historically important as it is sonically rich, harrowing, cinematic and eclectic, anchored in the blues and gospel and taking flight pretty much everywhere else. This Cuneiform release gets the top spot for 2012." — **Alan Young, *Lucid Culture***

"The crowning achievement of trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith's distinguished career to date." — **John Sharpe, *All About Jazz***

"A monumental achievement... With anthemic, roiling sounds designed to celebrate and embody the once-inextricable link between protest and music." — **Peter Margasak, *Chicago Reader***

"Spanning centuries of black history and a range of fierce jazz styles, Wadada Leo Smith's *Ten Freedom Summers* is a monumental evocation of America's Civil Rights movement." — **Bill Shoemaker, *The Wire***

"*Ten Freedom Summers* truly deserves to be described as an epic work: 19 pieces across four CDs, encompassing more than four hours of music, composed by Wadada Leo Smith over the last 34 years. If it weren't for the fact that the prolific 70-year-old trumpeter shows absolutely no sign of slowing down, it would be tempting to call it the work of a lifetime." — **Daniel Spicer, *BBC***

"He's a cultural icon and one of the few remaining still delivering African American key jazz players and composers from the generation who came of age in the sixties." — **Max Reinhardt, *Late Junction, BBC Radio 3***

"Four stars. It might seem glib to say that a serious subject such as the Civil Rights movement... requires serious music. But this deeply moving and artistically ambitious work gives credence to the statement." — **Kevin Le Gendre, *Jazzwise***

"10/10. More than anything, *Freedom* is about sound: the tangible, physically beautiful sounds of Smith's imperative trumpet and of different instruments in combination, testing their own limits... Like visiting a sacred site or reading Tolstoy or Proust, listening to *Freedom* is an emotional and intellectual luxury, a chance to commune with greatness." — **Josh Langhoff, *Pop Matters***

"Smith's own playing on the trumpet is always inspiring. His sound throughout this cycle is intense and raw, imaginative and poetic, sensitive and passionate... *Ten Freedom Summers* is an artistic peak in Smith's already impressive musical career. It is also a milestone statement about the societal role of an artist and the arts." — **Eyal Hareuveni, *All About Jazz***

"From the exploitative roots of slavery to the emancipatory advocacy of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Smith's music resonates with the suffering and the dreams of a better life that embodied the decade of 1954 to 1964 that is the subject of this powerful compendium of compositions." — **Glen Hall, *Exclaim***

"Smith's music can be complex, even thorny – but he is a deeply and thoughtfully spiritual man and his music is also heartfelt, positive and even passionate." — **Bill Tilland, *Foxy Digitalis***

"An important moment in jazz history... This album transcends any consideration of where it might stand by comparison to other albums released this year. Instead, consider this as a jazz counterpart to Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, a chronicle with artistic merit equal to its inestimable historical value." — **Alan Young, *Lucid Culture***

"*Ten Freedom Summers* is a release you truly have to hear for yourself to believe. If you love the body of jazz and classical music, there is without a doubt that you need this in your collection. Easily the most important socially slanted album of the last 30 years that represents an aspect of history... This is what American music is all about." — **Erik Otis, *Sound Colour Vibration***

"The work of a lifetime by one of jazz's true visionaries, a kaleidoscopic, spiritually charged opus inspired by the struggle for African-American freedom and equality before the law. Triumphant and mournful, visceral and philosophical, searching, scathing and relentlessly humane, Smith's music embraces the turbulent era's milestones while celebrating the civil rights movement's heroes and martyrs." — **Bruce Gallanter, *Downtown Music Gallery***

"*Ten Freedom Summers* is your basic masterpiece... An emotionally overdriven, ever-changing tapestry full of rewarding digressions." — **Richard Gehr, *Relix***

"Smith blends skilled writing, including passages for a nine-piece ensemble of strings and winds. The tempers of the work range from tumult in 'Dred Scott' to gauzy reflection in 'Fannie Lou Hamer and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, 1964.' Titles and themes aside, the music, *as music*, is potent and satisfying." — **Doug Ramsey, *Riffides***

"*Ten Freedom Summers* is his magnum opus; it belongs in jazz's canonical lexicon with Duke Ellington's *Black Brown & Beige* and Max Roach's *Freedom Now Suite*." — **Thom Jurek, *All Music Guide***

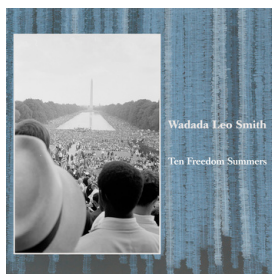
"Trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith ended his magnum opus *Ten Freedom Summers* with a soundbite from Martin Luther King's prophetic 'I've Been To the Mountaintop' speech, but the five hours of music... were anything but derivative... Smith affirmed that the battle for civil liberty was an essentially positive experience for humanity, but his writing suggested a starker legacy." — **Michael Jackson, *DownBeat***

"No matter how one approaches and absorbs *Ten Freedom Summers*, as musician, artist, historian, sociologist, activist, or born of a particular ethnicity, the crux of this music, albeit of epic proportions, is simple. Eloquently explained by Smith, true freedom is not found or discovered because of fortune; it is earned through the persistent quality of the hard work of those who struggle to make themselves heard... The music, of course, forever memorable." — **Lyn Horton, *Jazz Times***

"Smith's grandest effort yet, a broad canvas dealing with the Civil Rights movement, but in poeticized musical terms, and for both jazz and 'classical' forces... He has managed the feat, idealistically and brilliantly." — **Santa Barbara Independent**

"Through all the music's fits and oscillations, the compositional aptitude of Leo Smith resulted in a powerful statement of historically oriented but forward-thinking music that left a lasting impression." — **Luke Stewart, *CapitalBop***

WADADA LEO SMITH RECORDINGS ON CUNEIFORM RECORDS



Wadada Leo Smith - *Ten Freedom Summers*

[2012, Rune 350/351/352/353]

Golden Quartet/Quintet

Wadada Leo Smith - composer, trumpet **Anthony Davis** - piano **John Lindberg** - bass
Pheeroan akLaff - drums **Susie Ibarra** - drums

Southwest Chamber Music

Jeff von der Schmidt - conductor
Alison Bjorkedal - harp **Jim Foschia** - clarinet **Lorenz Gamma** - violin
Peter Jacobson - cello **Larry Kaplan** - flute **Jan Karlin** - viola
Tom Peters - bass **Lynn Vartan** - percussion **Shalini Vijayan** - violin



Wadada Leo Smith's Organic - *Heart's Reflections*

[2011, Rune 330/331]

Organic

Wadada Leo Smith - trumpet, electric trumpet **Michael Gregory** - electric guitars **Pheeroan akLaff** - drums
John Lindberg - acoustic bass, electric acoustic bass **Angelica Sanchez** - acoustic piano, Wurlitzer electric piano
Brandon Ross - electric guitar **Josh Gerowitz** - electric guitar **Skúli Sverrisson** - electric bass, 6-string bass
Lamar Smith - electric guitar **Stephanie Smith** - violin **Casey Anderson** - alto saxophone
Casey Butler - tenor saxophone **Mark Trayle** - laptop **Charlie Burgin** - laptop



Wadada Leo Smith - *Spiritual Dimensions*

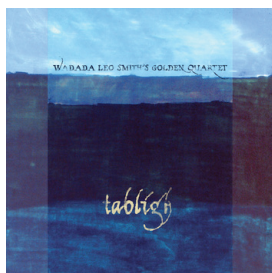
[2009, Rune 290/291]

Golden Quintet

Wadada Leo Smith - trumpet **Vijay Iyer** - piano, synthesizer **John Lindberg** - bass
Pheeroan AkLaff - drums **Don Moye** - drums

Organic

Wadada Leo Smith - trumpet **Nels Cline** - guitar **Michael Gregory** - guitar
Brandon Ross - guitar **Lamar Smith** - guitar **Okkyung Lee** - cello
John Lindberg - double bass **Skuli Sverrisson** - electric bass **Pheeroan AkLaff** - drums

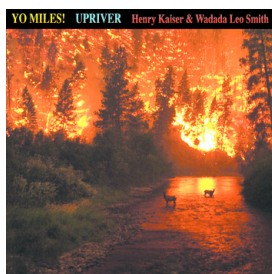


Wadada Leo Smith's Golden Quartet - *Tabligh*

[2008, Rune 270]

Golden Quartet

Wadada Leo Smith - trumpet
Vijay Iyer - piano, Fender Rhodes & synthesizer
John Lindberg - bass
Shannon Jackson - drums



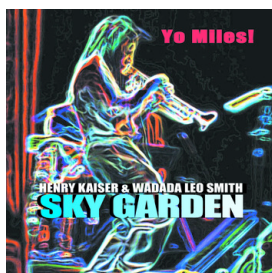
Henry Kaiser & Wadada Leo Smith: *Yo Miles! - Upriver*

[2005, Rune 201/202]

Wadada Leo Smith - electric and acoustic trumpets **Henry Kaiser** - electric guitar
Steve Smith - drums **Chris Muir** - electric guitar **Tom Coster** - keyboards
David Creamer - electric guitar **Karl Perazzo** - percussion **Mike Keneally** - electric guitar, keyboard
Greg Osby - alto saxophone **Michael Manring** - bass **John Tchicai** - tenor and soprano saxophones

special guests

Zakir Hussain - tabla and percussion **Dave Creamer** - guitar
ROVA Sax Quartet (Bruce Ackley, Steve Adams, Larry Ochs, Jon Raskin)



Henry Kaiser & Wadada Leo Smith: *Yo Miles! - Sky Garden*

[2004, Rune 191/192]

Wadada Leo Smith - electric and acoustic trumpets **Henry Kaiser** - electric guitar
Steve Smith - drums **Chris Muir** - electric guitar **Tom Coster** - keyboards
David Creamer - electric guitar **Karl Perazzo** - percussion **Mike Keneally** - electric guitar, keyboard
Greg Osby - alto saxophone **Michael Manring** - bass **John Tchicai** - tenor and soprano saxophones

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Zakir Hussain - tabla and percussion **Dave Creamer** - guitar
ROVA Sax Quartet (Bruce Ackley, Steve Adams, Larry Ochs, Jon Raskin)