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Fred Wesley – A Blow For Me, A Toot To You – Speakers Corner Records

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Fred Wesley & The Horny Horns Featuring Maceo Parker – A Blow

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For Me, A Toot To You – Atlantic Records SD 18214 (1977)/Speakers Corner Records (2021) 180-gram stereo vinyl, 41:44 ****1/2:

Speakers Corner Records releases a re-mastered vinyl of a classic early funk album.

(Fred Wesley – trombone, vocals; Maceo Parker – tenor saxophone; Michael Brecker – saxophone; Randy Brecker – trumpet, flugelhorn; Bootsy Collins – guitar, bass, drums; Gary Shider – guitar; Rick Gardner – trumpet; Bernie Worrell – keyboards; Frank “Kash” Waddy – drums; Jerome Brailey – drums)

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In the world of funk, trombonist Fred Wesley was impactful. In the 1960's he was an important contributor to “The Godfather Of Soul”, James Brown. He played on many hits, including “Say It Loud-I’m Black, I’m Proud”, “Mother Popcorn” and “Hot Pants” (also, a co-writer). In the 1970's Wesley became a pivotal member of George Clinton's various game-changing Parliament-Funkadelic groups. He fronted his own soul-funk outfit, The Horny Horns in the late 70's. Wesley became an in-demand session player for dozens of soul, jazz, rock and jazz acts like Dr. John, Count Basie, Bootsy Collins, Ray Charles, Lionel Hampton, Van Morrison, Maceo Parker, Natalie Cole, Randy Crawford, Earth Wind & Fire and The Red Hot Chili Peppers to name just a few. Wesley is a visiting artist/academic at Berklee School Of Music and Columbia College Of Chicago. His musical imprint has traversed musical genres and generations of musicians.

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Temple University Jazz Band - Without You, No Me - BCM+D Records

Speakers Corner Records has released a 180-gram re-mastered vinyl of *A Blow For Me, A Toot For You*. This album features fellow James Brown alumnus Maceo Parker and is produced by funk pioneers George Clinton and Bootsy Collins, who also co-wrote all but one song. This is pure 70's funk. Side A opens with the festive, groove-laden "Up The Down Stroke". The horn section is vibrant and the steady pulse never relents. Like many arrangements in this genre, there are repeat lines with unison singing and gospel-infused backup vocals. There is considerable studio polish, but the soulful ambiance is never diluted. The disco-like presentation is hypnotic and the basic riff structure goes on and on...and it is great! In a polyrhythmic structure, the title track deploys synthesizers, piano, thick bass and stellar horn charts. It reflects a more bluesy approach and Wesley's trombone solo is visceral and downright nasty. Of course there are hooks everywhere, including dual trumpet and saxophone runs. The ending is unbridled soul-jazz intonation. "When In Doubt: Vamp" has a very muscular jazzy resonance for the first 1:34. Then this unbelievable horn section transitions to-in the-pocket elocution with soaring trumpet and trombone runs.

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Side B kicks off with an ear-catching vampy bass and effect-laden guitar on "Between Two Sheets". Wesley is scintillating on trombone and matches the hot-blooded lyrical context of the song. Again, the party atmosphere is represented in the spoken/shouted vocals and slow-burning saxophone. Perhaps the cut with the longest-running cultural effect is "Four Play". This appears to be the most cohesive ensemble play. There is a tight

rhythm down beat, and Wesley executes his most extended, nuanced trombone solo. The precision of the horn accents is compelling, and the guitar is very effective. “Four Play” has been remixed and sampled over the years, increasing its continued legacy. The finale, “Peace Fugue” is a distinctive change of pace. Wesley’s tender, deeply expressive lead against a mellow wall of counterpoint harmony (trumpet, keyboards) is rich and atmospheric. While it still beats with a pulse, it transcends the repeat dynamics and brings out the best of the studio players.

Speakers Corner Records has done a superior job in re-mastering *A Blow For Me, A Toot For You* to 180-gram vinyl. The dense, layered mix is smooth and the stereo separation is top-notch. Funk pioneers like Wesley (and obviously Maceo Parker, George Clinton and Bootsy Collins) took music into a new, exciting direction. This album more than stands the test of time!

TrackList:

Side A: Up For The Down Stroke; A Blow For Me, A Toot For You; When In Doubt:Vamp

Side B: Between Two Sheets; Four Play; Peace Fugue.

—Robbie Gerson

