

DOWN BEAT

Freddie Hubbard *Pinnacle* RESONANCE 2007 ★★★★½

Ten years after Freddie Hubbard aligned himself with a team of all-star improvisers and cut "The Intrepid Fox" as a moody yet feisty blues for the CTI label, he hit the stage of a San Francisco club in 1980, flanked by journeymen, and proceeded to kick the holy hell out of the tune. Jazz buffs know the version on *Red Clay* is nothing to sniff at. But the "Fox" that shows up on this new set of tracks from Keystone Korner is raging, as is most every performance here. From the rhythm section simultaneously imploding and exploding, to the master himself dropping bravura science as a matter of course, *Pinnacle* renders moot the old "studio vs. bandstand" question.

Of course, the trumpeter is known for aggression. But the level of articulation found in the bulk of the solos here serves as a great reminder that Hubbard's eloquence was equal to his energy. His lines on "One Of Another Kind" are builders and burners, the kind of mix that pulls an audience into an artist's psyche. All sorts of lyrical bursts shoot from his horn:



electrifying salvos that stress machismo, gliding flurries that swoop through the storm and, at one point, a tight funnel of sound that smears notes à la Lester Bowie while pile-driving like Fats Navarro.

If *Pinnacle* lives up to its name, it's because Hubbard wasn't doing all the heavy lifting himself. Each member of the

two bands that drive these tracks (recorded in separate sessions in June and October), boosts the vim and vigor quotient. A lot of it has to do with the aggression of Bay Area trap demon Eddie Marshall (who splashes "Giant Steps" with as much ardor as the boss), but drummer Sinclair Lott is kicking mucho butt, too. Bassist Larry Klein is responsible for jab after jab, and pianist Billy Childs is relentless in his quest to bolster the group's tension. The fidelity isn't fantastic; there's a mild bootleg vibe to the sound quality. But the album's animation more than makes up for it.

—Jim Macnie

Pinnacle: The Intrepid Fox; First Light; One Of Another Kind; Happiness Is Now; The Summer Knows; Blues For Duane; Giant Steps. (64:23)
Personnel: Freddie Hubbard, trumpet; Billy Childs, piano, Rhodes; Larry Klein, bass; Phil Ranelin, trombone (1-4, 6, 7); Hadley Caliman, tenor saxophone (3, 6, 7); David Schnitter, tenor saxophone (1, 2, 4); Eddie Marshall, drums (3, 5, 6, 7); Sinclair Lott, drums (1, 2, 4).
Ordering info: resonancerecords.org

The Hot Box

CD ▾ Critics ▸ John McDonough John Corbett Jim Macnie Paul de Barros

Sonny Rollins ★★★★★ ★★★★★ ★★★ ★★★★★½

Freddie Hubbard *Pinnacle* ★★★★★ ★★★★★ ★★★★★½ ★★★★★

Jane Bunnett & Hilario Duran *Cuban Rhapsody* ★★★★★½ ★★★★★½ ★★★ ★★★

Dee Dee Bridgewater *Midnight Sun* ★★★★★½ ★★★★★½ ★★★ ★★½

Critics' Comments

Freddie Hubbard, *Pinnacle*

A newcomer to the cluster of 1980-'81 Hubbards on Pablo, Prestige, etc. that seemed like apologies for his brief Columbia fling. Can be a bit mannered with the trills, tremolos and rips. But the depth and density of his sound and crisp punch of his diction are incapable of an ambivalent note. Parallels and supplements his 1980 release *Live At The North Sea Jazz Festival*.
—John McDonough

Reminds one of the ways that the '80s were a continuation of the '70s. In a good way. Skillet-hot hard-bop, more thickly arranged funk, heavy Miles Davis atmosphere and Hubbard's aggressive trumpet make for a pleasing trip to the vault.
—John Corbett

Wow, what a treat to hear Freddie at the top of his game in this live 1980 sound grab from San Francisco's late and lamented Keystone Korner. The sound's nothing to write home about (mostly off the board?) but it's a gas to hear Freddie burn up "The Intrepid Fox" and poignantly stab "The Summer Knows." The presence of the late tenor saxophonist Hadley Caliman is an added bonus.
—Paul de Barros