

Matt Haviland

TROMBONIST • COMPOSER • ARRANGER

LINER NOTES

SOMETHING TO SAY (2020)

Notes & Tones

1 ARIETIS (F. Hubbard)

This is Freddie Hubbard's classic tune and arrangement, but with trombone in the lead and two saxophones. After the 'bone solo, Mark launches into a fluid series of variations over the 34-bar form. Vincent's opening trills clearly inspire Johnathan to kick it into high gear, and Dave keeps it there with intensity, and rhythmic brilliance. Freddie said the title relates to his birth sign, Aries, and suggests a "pioneering", "changeable and curious" spirit.

2 GRAHAM BENJAMIN (M. Haviland)

This is the most recent composition in this set, and is named for my son. As he begins his 31st trip around the sun, I offer this tribute to his compassionate but uncompromising spirit, sharp and inquisitive mind, and pursuit of a life where excellence, honesty, love, fairness, and family all have their place. Here, the quintet explores the breadth of the extended song form, and each soloist speaks from the heart.

3 FILLET OF SOUL (M. Haviland)

One day I was exploring a bass line with shifting minor harmonies. A nice, earthy vibe was coming together when I realized it was similar to the first 8 bars of Body and Soul. I continued following that muse, getting into some other harmonic territory along the way. Ugonna opens with a declarative solo statement, leading into a 4-horn arrangement that I wrote to get the most out of the rich harmonies. At the bridge, the ensemble improvises over a repeating bass figure, expanding on the energy until a rhythmic hook locks everyone back in. A half-chorus for each soloist is plenty of time to tell a story.

4 INNER URGE (J. Henderson)

I have loved playing this tune for years, and it never fails to re-energize me. This is Dave's arrangement that incorporates a 12/8 vamp over the last 8 bars of the form. The trombone starts over that groove as an intro and has the first solo after the melody. Vince delivers a passionate sermon, in total command of his instrument and message. Dave explores the two distinct rhythmic terrains then hands it off to Johnathan, whose masterful solo ripples across the song's form.

5 GET OUT OF TOWN (C. Porter)

I first heard this beautiful Cole Porter tune sung by Ella Fitzgerald as part of her American Songbook series. Dave provides a gentle yet probing introduction that displays another side of his endless capacity for musical invention. Then we enter the emotional realm of The Ballad. After the quartet ruminates on the song and its harmonies, Ugonna offers a personal, clearly articulated interpretation. I come back in for the second half of the tune, eventually steering back to the melody until we float into a brief coda.

6 FINDING THE WORDS (M. Haviland)

This is an original song, composed many years ago, that I have always wanted to record. The original title was "I Don't Know How to Say It." I wrote an accompanying lyric that opens with that sentiment, but goes on to tell a love story quite clearly. I now prefer the new title, speaking more to a journey of discovery. The lyric still works, though, so stay tuned on that! Bill Mobley joins me and Vince for this 3-horn arrangement.

7 VISA (C. Parker)

In learning this blues, a longtime favorite, I became enamored with Bird's ingenious use of a simple rhythm ("Oop Bop Sh'Bam") to unify his catchy, rising and falling melodic line. I was inspired to write a countermelody, in the spirit of some other Bird tunes (notably "Ah Leu Cha"), with the intent that it sound completely organic to the composition. Along the way, I started hearing it as a slower, tango-inspired piece with plenty of space to breathe. Johnathan sets it up with quiet authority, then proceeds to lead the group on a rhythmic journey down a slow and winding river, with Ugonna gently propelling us along and Dave pointing out the harmonic possibilities all around us.

8 THE WAY IT IS (M. Haviland)

This composition has had several lives, but has never been recorded. I wrote a new 4-horn arrangement for this date to add fresh colors and timbres. The tempo, atypical harmonies, and escalating rhythms create an intensity that the musicians naturally incorporate into the performance. Bill opens up the soloing with a long, bravura phrase, followed by sometimes-angular, sometimes-chromatic phrases full of energy and invention.

9 DRIFTIN' (H. Hancock)

This was the first tune we recorded that day, and you can hear how the musicians came ready to play. Bam! That deep groove feels so good every time, and it serves as the perfect closer here. The straight-up interpretation of Herbie Hancock's bluesy AABA song form (and horns-then-piano arrangement) leads into a searing solo from Vince. I end my chorus with a nod to Curtis Fuller, and Dave displays his deep feeling for the blues. Ugonna takes a half chorus and we're on our way home.

Thanks... To Vincent, David, Ugonna, Johnathan, Mark, and Bill for helping to bring this project to life in such a vibrant way. To Katherine for documenting the sounds so beautifully. To Alan for his mastering touch. To Dennis for capturing the occasion on film, and to Zinnia for her visual esthetic and design skills. To my wife Lynn and son Graham for their love and support. To my parents, family, and friends for being there for me over the years. To my late mother-in-law, Lila Applebaum, for believing in me and helping to fund this project. To mentors who have guided and gently pushed me along the way: Angelo Merola, Tony Salvatori, Phil Wilson, Herb Pomeroy, Ken Pullig, and Bert Pepper.

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Dave Kikoski appears courtesy of HighNote Records

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