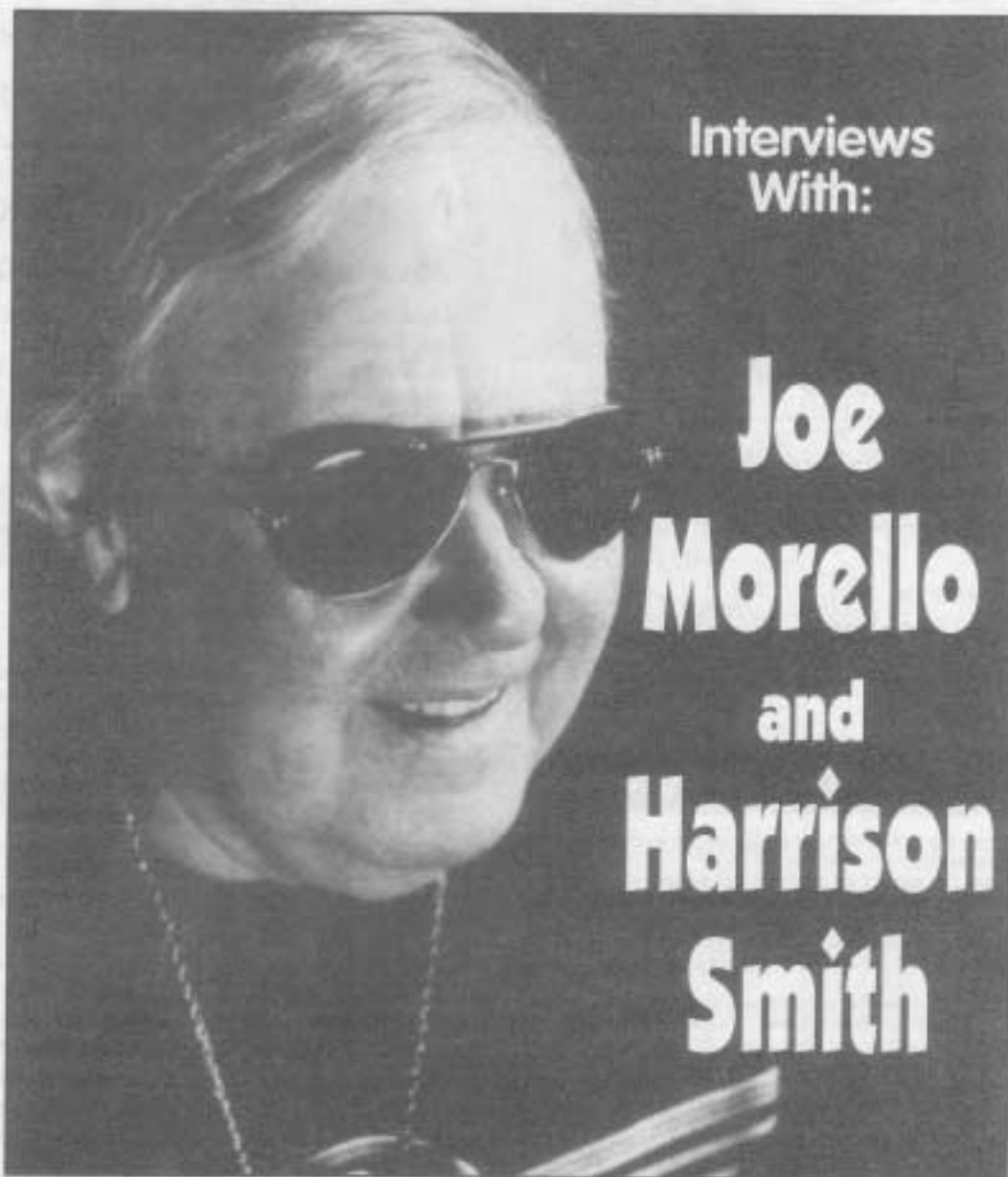


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THE REVIEW of JAZZ & BLUES: CREATIVE IMPROVISED MUSIC



News::Book Reviews::Record Reviews

FELIPE SALLES, MIND MOTIONS, FRESH SOUND NEW TALENT 166.

Freudian Slip / Mind Motions / ORB / Libra / Laura's Nightmare / Sphere / Magister Joseph / The Return of the Chromo Sapiens / Reflection. 65:00.

Salles, ss, ts, flt; Tony D'Aventi, flghn, tpt; Nando Michelin, p; Rick McLaughlin, b; Bertram Lehmann, d; Pedro Ito, perc, ocean d, djembe, caxixi, cowbell; Joel Yenniar, tbn; Ernesto Diaz; cga, timbales; Laura Arpiainen, vln; Sam Ou, cel. 5/25, 5/26 & 9/22/02, Westwood, MA.

Fresh Sound New Talent, the latest label arm of Spanish impresario Jordi Pujol's Jazz empire, has covered substantial ground in its comparative short time as an active label. By documenting the fairly recently revitalized Latino to New York nexus, it's managed to draw on a sizeable and eclectic pool of musicians. *Mind Motions* encapsulates the artistry of saxophonist Felipe Salles, who fronts a variable and revolving band comprised of common and unexpected Jazz instruments. The presence of percussionists Ito and Diaz in combination with Lehmann's standard drum kit give the band an added rhythmic versatility on many of the pieces. Similarly, Arpiainen and Ou replace the grounding bass of McLaughlin

on the concluding "Reflection." The end result is a "rhythm section" that on most tracks ends up eclipsing the more traditional front line of horns in terms of girth and diversity, much to the benefit of the music. Salles himself does little to quantify the sounds, acknowledging Brazilian, Spanish, and American components, but never explicitly pledging allegiance to any of them. His music is thusly difficult to nail down and, as he argues in his notes, what's the point of trying to do so? The music should speak for itself, and that it does.

Pairing his own reeds and flute with the brass of D'Aventi or Yenniar, Salles scripts some promising harmonic structures. A percolating current of percussion keeps the rhythm from ever growing stale, but unfortunately the same can't be said for Salles playing some of the time. His mealy soprano on "Freudian Slip" skirts the fringes of smooth Jazz whilst a cross-hatched rhythm from Ito and Lehmann spools out beneath him. D'Aventi's flugelhorn improvisations on the theme carry more weight alongside Michelin's sturdy piano comping and solo. Salles' tenor shows more moxie and emotive focus on the title track, but this time it's the lightweight nature of the tune itself that feels problematic, a condition not helped by the presence of the leader's soprano at the start. Yennior's trombone supplies a second horn line and the resulting lubricious harmonies work well against the responsive counterpoint of the rhythm section, but the piece still feels slightly cobbled together. "Libra" matches both brassmen with Salles' tenor and the fit seems better suited through the consequent larger frontline sound. Ito also expands his percussion canvas to include an array of traditional Brazilian elements to further flesh out the piece, though the overall impact ends up still rather pedestrian.

The added presence of Arpiainen's violin on the septet reading of "Laura's Nightmare" injects welcome harmonic tension. Her slicing arco lines scribble through the hairpin turns of the tune in close proximity to Salles' generating much needed heat. "Magister Joseph" introduces the leader's languid bass clarinet and another septet this time with Ito and Diaz in tandem. Once again the larger numbers work to Salles' advantage. Overall there's enough good to outweigh the dubious, and quite a lot of competent playing along the way, but Salles' effort still seems a flawed enterprise, leaving this reviewer's thumb at half mast.

Derek Taylor