

Billy Kerr, *Saxophone Journal*, July/August 2006 issue

You don't hear too many young players nowadays whose playing shows a true influence from players several generations removed. Among the last musicians to burst onto the scene in a meaningful way showing such influence were trumpeter Warren Vache (clearly showing the influence of Bix Beiderbecke) and tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton (showing the influence of Lester Young and Zoot Sims etc.). Tenor saxophonist clarinetist Alek Razdan's playing reflects the influence of Sam Butera and Acker Bilk. I know you must be wondering why I have chosen to comment on a player from this school of jazz since I generally reserve my observations for more modern practitioners; oh!, did I mention that Razdan is 12 years old?

Razdan is a 7th grader from Rockport, Massachusetts. To hear him is not to believe him. He possesses a sound that is as big as a house, great time, and a true feel for improvisation. Yes, the solos are all his (I checked it out.) Razdan started on the clarinet in 8th [*sic*] grade, four years ago, and added saxophone in the summer of 2005, less than a year ago. He listens to the older players (his words) such as Gene Ammons, Sonny Stitt, and Sil Austin. He plays a weekly gig in Gloucester, Massachusetts with a group called the Megawatt Blues Crushers, and plays for private parties.

The music on this CD is a mix of blues tunes and jazz standards, and the band consists of Razdan on tenor and clarinet, John Hyde, keyboard; Dave Vincent, drums; and Razdan's father Rik on tenor (listed as backup tenor sax). The CD opens with the title tune written by Razdan, a medium-up tempo swinger that falls somewhere between a blues and Rhythm. Razdan comes out of the starting gate guns ablazin', with lots of pizzaz and attitude. He growls with the best of them, and while his harmonic language is not yet developed (thank goodness for small favors, although he should be saving *Giant Steps* for his 2nd CD), his riff oriented solo is strong and shows terrific chops. *The Girl From Ipanema* is done as a moderate bossa nova featuring two low-register tenors in unison on the melody, with young Alek talking the solo a la Ben Webster. Razdan plays clarinet on two tunes, *When the Saints Go Marching In* and *Stranger on the Shore*. His sound is somewhere between Acker Bilk and Johnny Dodds, but again his time, feel, and understanding of the music are truly astounding.

The CD closes with an up-tempo version of *Take the A-Train* in which Razdan and dad Rik trade 8s for a couple of choruses. I guarantee, you'll have trouble figuring out just who is playing when, in the exchange. When you listen to this recording, think of all the "older players" sssyou [*sic*] know that can't swing from a tree, and then listen to 12 year old Alek Razdan swing his tail off.