



Ben Rudnick

Blast Off!

LISTEN UP 007

★★★★

Ralph's World

The Amazing Adventures Of Kid Astro

MINI FRESH 70056

★★★★

David Leonhardt Jazz Group

Jazz For Kids

BIG BANG 9572

★★★½

Finding children's music albums for the pre-school to 6th grade set is easy as ABC. The challenge comes figuring out what releases have the stuff to please children and young-at-heart grownups.

On Ben Rudnick's *Blast Off!*, the words catchy and irrepressible just begin to describe the string-band music uncorked by a quintet of gifted instrumentalists whose idea of a rollicking good time runs from "Martian Hoedown" through "Juicy Black Fly" to "Dads Can Dance." Rudnick's active musical imagination is central to his charm, his music having a country rock base with bluegrass, polka, Tex-Mex, jazz, blues or folk colorants. His lead singing is more than adequate to his zany, smart tunes.

On *The Amazing Adventures Of Kid Astro*, singer/guitarist Ralph Covert delights young people at the same time he attracts older listeners with his winning melodies, clever and intelligent lyrics, and breadth of musical imagination (he's partial to several rock styles of the '70s). Saxophonist Mars Williams adds to the funky mirth of "Playground." Kids' favorite: "We Are Ants."

With *Jazz For Kids*, pianist David Leonhardt gives kids a sense of comfort with the melodies to threadbare tunes like "Are You Sleeping?" and "Somewhere Over The Rainbow." With any luck, the target audience will stay attentive for the improvisations. The kid connection would be stronger had the Pennsylvania-based performer-educator ventured outside his middle-aged comfort zone and jazzed-up fresher tunes from movies, television and pop culture.

—Frank-John Hadley

Blast Off: Rocket Ship Man; I Got A New Friend; Reading A Book; My Name Is Burt; Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious; Juicy Black Fly; M.T.A.; Martian Hoedown; Why'd The Chicken Cross The Road; Dads Can Dance; The Fox; Sons & Daughters. (39:20)

Personnel: Ben Rudnick, vocals, guitar, organ, foot stomps, hand claps; Arnie Ashford, bass, vocals; Jared Steer, drums, percussion; Mark Yacovone, accordion, melodica, piano; John Zevos, mandolin, vocals; with others.

Ordering Info: www.benrudnickandfriends.com

The Amazing Adventures Of Kid Astro: Kid Astro; Just Like The Monkeys; Fee Fi Fo Fum; Mr. Rabbit; Dumptruck; We Are Ants; The Tea Tale; Miss Molly Crackerjack; Who's The Winner?; Sucking Cider From A Straw; Playground; Old Man Dan; Sun In My Eyes; Treehouse Orchestra. (36:15)

Personnel: Ralph Covert, vocals, acoustic guitar, piano; John Nudzen, acoustic guitar, electric guitar, dobro, mandolin; Deb

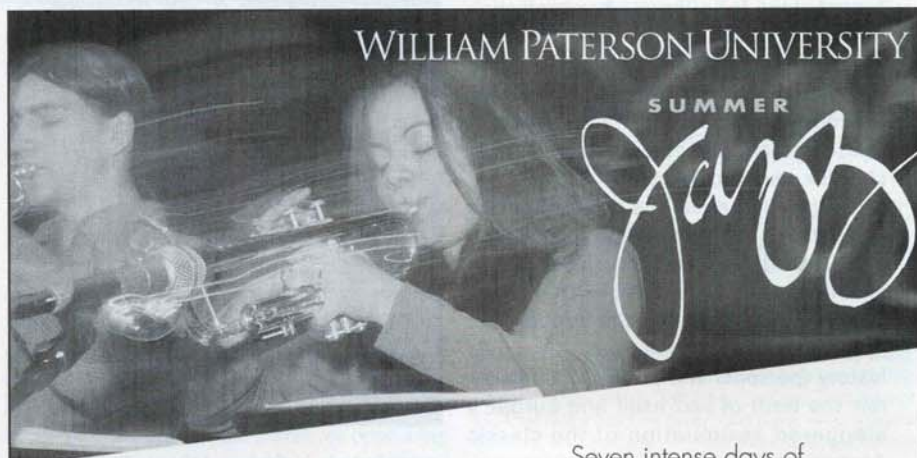
Lader, acoustic guitar; Steve Gerlach, electric guitar; Corky Siegel, harmonica; John Otto, clarinet; Mars Williams, saxophone; Matt Lewis, trumpet; Ben Lewis, piano, clavichord, organ; Michael Cole, keyboards; Pickles Piekarski, bass guitar; Matt Walker, drums; Tommi Zender, Eric Blomstrom, percussion.

Ordering Info: www.minifresh.com

Jazz For Kids: Are You Sleeping?; When You Wish Upon A Star; This Old Man; Never Never Land; Flintstones; Somewhere Over The Rainbow; Route 66; Someday My Prince Will Come; Hip Kids Blues; I'm An Old Cow Hand; My Favorite Things; Blues Shuffle; If You're Happy And You Know It. (41:26)

Personnel: David Leonhardt, piano; Nancy Reed, vocals; Larry McKenna, saxophone; Tony Marino, bass; Taro Okamoto, drums.

Ordering Info: www.davidleonhardt.com



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