

# Chris Parker

## Reviews

[chris@chrisparkerdrums.com](mailto:chris@chrisparkerdrums.com)

### **Toph-E and The Pussycats Live In Detroit (M'Bubba Music 1001)**

Lively and hugely entertaining, this band plays vibrant music that draws on RnB, bop and a few other linked genres along the way. The New York-based band's repertoire on this live date is mainly originals but there is also Miles Davis's 'All Blues' and Duke Ellington and Harry Carney's 'Rockin' In Rhythm'. The musicians involved are Chris Parker (drums), Will Lee (bass, vocals), Ralph MacDonald (percussion), Clifford Carter (piano, keyboards) and David Mann (tenor and soprano saxophones). The band has been in existence since 2000 and has developed considerable rapport. This, allied to the obvious love they have for the music they play makes for an exciting and thoroughly enjoyable CD that should appeal to many.

***Swing2bop.com***

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We are treated to a rollicking sojourn of tight swinging jazz, plus the frosting: Some taut vocal harmony by Will Lee on vocals with his (I will have to assume) digital vocal assist by machine. Trust me when I say that this prior statement isn't offered to lessen the impact of this fine project. Leader Chris Parker as his own liner notes so aptly state: "Take no prisoners in Motown."

### ***George W. Carroll/The Musicians' Ombudsman***

Monday, February 12, 2007 - 02:52 PM

***www.ejazznews.com***

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### **CD Reviews: Toph-E and The Pussycats Live in Detroit**

Sunday, February 25, 2007 - 03:26 PM

***Glenn Astarita***

***www.ejazznews.com***

This outing is largely about a group of revered session musicians letting their hair down in front of a live audience recorded at the Detroit International Jazz Festival. Here, bassist/vocalist Will Lee, keyboardist Clifford Carter and three other luminaries reaffirm their spunkier musicality. The pulsating string of events feature a conglomerate of in-the-pocket grooves, often spiced with percussionist Ralph MacDonald's Afro-Cuban accents and more! In effect, the quintet heralds a Motown-jazz schema via its upbeat and contemporary-minded spins on Duke Ellington's toe-tapping Rockin' in Rhythm, and Bill Withers' pop hit, Just the Two of Us. And when you add soul-drenched and fiery solos by saxophonist David Mann, the ensemble stirs up some heated momentum in numerous spots.

Drummer, leader and founder Chris Parker renders a frothy bottom end for his band-mates' driving choruses fueled with turbo-mode, RnB-fused jazz and radiantly pronounced funk. More importantly, this album exemplifies the aura of a given band operating at the top of its game. Hence, the live element is duly communicated, throughout the preponderance of this indubitably persuasive endeavor.

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### **CD Reviews: Toph-E And The Pussycats.. Live In Detroit...Wax Music 2006**

Wednesday, May 31, 2006 - 09:00 AM

***John Gilbert***

This album was recorded live at the Detroit International Jazz Festival, featuring a group that scorches wax to the max as evidenced in Duke's "Rockin' In Rhythm" is joyfully romped through with Clifford Cater's burning piano solo leading the way.

There are 8 tracks on this CD and every one of them swings in high hip fashion. 4 Stars

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### **Toph-E and the Pussycats "Live in Detroit"**

Something funky this way comes. Recorded at the 2004 Detroit International Jazz Festival, this album features the NYC super-group performing a crowd-pleasing live set. Toph-E is drummer Chris Parker, and the Pussycats are keyboardist Clifford Carter, bassist Will Lee, percussionist Ralph MacDonald and saxophonist David Mann. The Chicago-born Parker has played drums with everyone from Paul Butterfield to Paul Simon, including Aretha Franklin, James Brown, the Brecker Brothers and Miles Davis; while first-call bassist Will Lee has played with a similarly wide ranging cast of artists (including Frank Sinatra), but may be best known as an original member of the David Letterman Late Night house band. David Mann was lead tenor for Tower of Power and has played with people like Luther Vandross, Pat Metheny, and Bob James; while Carter has played keyboards with James Taylor, Natalie Cole, Michael Franks and Herbie Mann. And of course, Ralph MacDonald has played too many sessions to count and may be the best known percussionist in the world today. These are some heavy (Pussy) cats, indeed.

With an all-star cast like this, one can hardly go wrong, and the song choices are strong as well. This joyful set blends elements of RnB, Jazz, Soul and Funk and runs from the Duke Ellington opener - "Rockin in Rhythm" (with a killer soprano sax solo by Mann) through to a wonderful encore of Ralph MacDonald's "Mister Magic" (made famous by Grover Washington, Jr.). In between there is a steamy Parker original - "Minky, Don't You Weep" with Parker's intense drumming and Macdonald setting his congas on fire. On this song, as on the others, the interplay between the rhythm section members is stellar. "Tee" - a tribute to the late great pianist Richard Tee follows - with Carter channeling the gospel-inspired style of the big man over Lee's warm bass tones.

A charming cover of Macdonald's "Just the Two of Us" - a big hit for Grover Washington Jr., and co-writer (along with William Salter) Bill Withers is a welcome inclusion; while the brilliant keyboardist Don Grolnick (Dreams, Brecker Brothers, etc...) - whose life ended much too early due to non-Hodgkins lymphoma - is given his due on his intensely driving "Human Bites." With jazz funk credentials such as these, as can be imagined, the playing by all members is first rate, and here, as throughout, the rhythm section is masterful in allowing space for Carter and Mann to solo. Meanwhile Miles Davis is given a reggae-treatment on "All Blues" where Lee takes a delightful solo turn in the spotlight.

Perhaps the highpoint of the recording however, is the high-powered, anti-war version of Gene McDaniels' Eddie Harris/Les McCann soul classic - "Compared to What" that had the audience dancing wildly and gleefully shouting along. A fine live recording of a group of top-flight musicians playing the music they love for an appreciative audience in the Motor City, "Live in Detroit" is a true pleasure for fans of funky, soulful RnB flavored jazz.

**Brad Walseth**

**[www.jazzchicago.net](http://www.jazzchicago.net)**

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