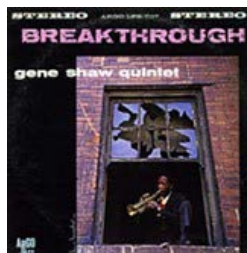


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Dusty Groove keeps cranking out the good stuff

Posted by Peter Margasak on 11.25.08 at 03:11 PM



The [reissue label](#) owned by Chicago music retailers [Dusty Groove](#) is flourishing--it's released 18 titles this year, and another half dozen are due in the next few months.

Among those 18 is *Break Through* by trumpeter Clarence "Gene" Shaw, a Detroit native who cut this album with a group of Chicago players and who's best known for his work on Charles Mingus classics like *Tijuana Moods* and *East Coasting*. Shaw had a falling out with Mingus in 1957, after coming down with the flu and missing a Mingus session he'd been booked for--apparently Mingus's phone was off the hook when Shaw tried to call and give notice. According to Gene Santoro's Mingus biography, *Myself When I Am Real*, the bassist later chewed Shaw out over the phone and threatened to have



him murdered by the mob.

Shaw not only refused to work with Mingus again but pretty much disappeared from the jazz scene for years, next resurfacing in Chicago with *Break Through*, his debut as a leader, released by the Chess subsidiary Argo in 1962. By that time, alas, Shaw had been largely forgotten--it didn't help that *Tijuana Moods*, recorded in '57, hadn't been issued for five years. *Break Through* is a superb straight-ahead session exploring modal sounds and soulful hard bop, recorded with four local players who hardly made any jazz recordings with anyone else. Shaw cut two more albums for Argo in the next couple of years, but that was the end of his recording career.

The other recent Dusty Groove release I'm calling out today is by Shades of Brown, a soul group that emerged from the south-side housing project Altgeld Gardens in the late 60s. *S.O.B.*, released by another Chess subsidiary called Cadet, was the group's only album, though it's certainly solid enough to have been the foundation for a much larger discography.

New liner notes by Rob Sevier of the [Numero Group](#) (Joe Segal's original notes, also included, don't help much) sketch the group's short story. They formed as the Cameo Esquires and became the Mentors after signing with ABC Records, but then their A and R man was canned and the two singles they'd recorded for the label were shelved. They'd become a popular local attraction, though, scoring opening slots at important venues like the Regal and Burning Spear, and in 1969 they signed with Chess, which saw pop potential in the group--and not without reason. This is a terrific and richly varied collection, ranging from Motown-style pop soul to hard-driving funk to lightweight crossover stuff ("*Ho-Hum World*," a truly bizarre meditation on self-absorption in a troubled world, includes a verse about a guy who shoots himself in the head). All the tunes were written by producer Bobby Miller, who'd previously worked with the Dells, and the arrangements are by Richard Evans and Charles Stepney.

The Shades of Brown made one more single in 1971 for a small indie, then disintegrated. I have no idea what's become of the band's members, but with any luck the reappearance of their sole LP should earn their talents some belated attention.

Today's playlist:

Trygve Seim & Frode Haltli, *Yeraz* (ECM)
Sa Dingding, *Alive* (Wrasse)
Valet, *Naked Acid* (Kranky)
Steve Reid Ensemble, *Daxaar* (Domino)
Stefano Pilia, *Action Silence Prayers* (Die Schachtel)

Tags: Chicago Jazz, Chicago soul, Dusty Groove, Charles Mingus, Shades of Brown, Clarence Gene Shaw