

David S. Ware ▶ *Deep Statements*

Saxophonist David S. Ware's trip to Chicago early November to perform a solo set at the 5th Annual Umbrella Music Festival tested his ability to tour. Indeed, it was his first concert outside of New York since his kidney transplant in May 2009. The transplant itself has not affected his playing, but he now has difficulty walking and standing up. Ware blames the anti-rejection medication he takes twice a day for shutting down nerves in his legs and feet.

The performance came in the wake of the releases of two new albums where his legendary ferocious playing—Ware is the quintessential free-jazz player—is tempered by thoughtful and deep statements. *Saturnian* and *Onecept* (both on AUM Fidelity) indicate that Ware still has a lot to contribute to the music. The former—the first in a planned series of solo recordings—describes his current state according to Vedic astrology, an interest he has been pursuing for about 40 years. "I am [currently] under the major influence of Saturn," said the 61-year-old saxophonist.

"Saturn gives out certain lessons. When you're in a Saturn period, it's for 19 years. Saturn is the slowest moving planet. It is intense because it's slow. I am in the middle of it. I went through dialysis, my father died, my mother died, my dogs died. If I can make it through the next 10 years, I'll be here for a long, long time."

"Onecept," the title of a trio date with bass player William Parker and percussionist Warren Smith, is a word of Ware's creation but again reflects his spiritual convictions. "Everybody knows about waking, dreaming and sleeping, but there is a fourth state, which is enlightenment," he continued. "It is a universal witness to the waking, the dreaming and the sleeping. Meditation prepares your mind to be in that state, and 'onecept' means that all the tunes, all the streams, are going towards enlightenment or cosmic consciousness. They are transcending time and space. It is like a flower opening up."

Both albums feature Ware on tenor sax, stritch and saxello and are fully improvised, which signals a new stage in Ware's musical journey.

Over the years, Ware's fierce playing has drawn comparisons to Albert Ayler, Pharoah Sanders, or late John Coltrane, but *Saturnian* and *Onecept* equally attest to broader influences. For instance, his return to the stritch and the saxello, which immediately bring to mind Roland Kirk, is no coincidence. "Roland was certainly an influence," said Ware. "He is the reason why I have those two horns. What he did is still in the air.



Sometime, I like to mess around with the territory he was dealing with—it's fun. I saw him a lot in the '60s and '70s. He was one of the cornerstones of jazz saxophone." The recordings also include nods to Thelonious Monk, a musician Ware describes as his first favorite piano player.

Whether his recent health problems have given him a sense of urgency or not—he believes strongly in reincarnation—Ware is moving fast. On his Chicago trip, Ware had only brought his tenor and his new love, a soprano (P. Mauriat 50sx) James Carter brought back from Taiwan for him. "I seem to have a natural affinity for this horn," he said. "I don't have to search. The ideas just come. The sound of the horn brings the ideas. It seems almost effortless." Ware has been working on it relentlessly since December 2009 to get it under control—control is a key element in his musical quest—and has already acquired an incredibly full and personal tone.

Recorded a couple of weeks following his Chicago appearance, his next project will feature yet another set of fully improvised music, this time featuring a quartet comprising pianist Cooper-Moore, whom he knows since his Berklee days, bassist Parker, possibly Ware's closest musical partner, and drummer Muhammad Ali, whom he met when he first went to Europe with Cecil Taylor's group. "People forget that when we came from Boston to New York, with Cooper-Moore and [drummer] Marc Edwards, we were improvisers, we had no music," he said.

—Alain Drouot