

# Back to an Ensemble After Solo Work, Offering a Mind-Meld With Partners

The saxophonist David S.

Ware is a force-of-nature improviser, the sort of musician whose output invites overblown comparisons to gales and eruptions,

or deep-focus seismic events. Vulnerability is an afterthought to any receptive experience of his music.

**NATE CHINEN**

**MUSIC REVIEW**

Mr. Ware, 60, was at the Blue Note on Monday night, leading the same trio heard on "Onecept" (Aum Fidelity), his new album that is out this week. On bass was William Parker, an intuitive dynamo and Mr. Ware's steadiest partner since the late 1980s; on drums was Warren Smith, an orchestral-minded accompanist with experience across the stylistic spectrum. Playing for precisely an hour, with one midset break for applause, the trio made a blank-canvas scrawl feel lighted with purpose.

The occasion came loaded with context: last spring, after more than a decade of dialysis, Mr. Ware received a lifesaving kidney transplant. He played his first postoperative performance, unaccompanied, about a year ago. It was recorded and rush-released in a limited edition as "Sarturnian (solo saxophones, volume 1)" (Aum Fidelity). The solo-saxophone format, often understood as a physical and existential trial, seemed to suit his mindset particularly well at the time. (As it does still: he's scheduled to perform a solo concert on Nov. 5 in Chicago, at the Umbrella Music Festival.)



BRIAN HARKIN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

## David S. Ware Trio

*Mr. Ware performing at the Blue Note on Monday evening.*

## *A trio's surge of invention, with an improviser at its core.*

Mr. Ware's re-engagement with ensemble work is another kind of achievement, in some ways a more encouraging one. "Onecept," recorded in December, is a vital document, steeped in the combative and sacramental modes of post-1960s free jazz but committed at every turn to the action just at hand, or just ahead. Through much of the al-

bum Mr. Ware seems to be warily circling the melody of a standard, "I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance With You," perhaps without conscious intention. It's a device, in any case, that indirectly recalls his most important saxophonic totem, Sonny Rollins.

There was no such signpost in Monday's first set, which Mr. Ware began with an invocation on stritch, a straight alto. The ensuing surge of group invention added up to a suite, with a twist roughly every five minutes. Mr. Ware, seated, played in fits and bursts, and then a caterwauling cry, as his partners lurched expertly in and out of a groove.

Several times they hit on a brisk swing tempo, which bubbled a while before dissolving into vapor. At one point, after the 20-minute mark, Mr. Smith played a press roll that gradually migrated from his snare to his high tom, whose pitch Mr. Ware then adopted as a tonal center. He huffed a string of phrases, hinting at the blues, and then went mystical, using circular breathing to maintain a hornet's-nest hum.

For the second half of the set he played tenor, his standard instrument, yielding an earthier, more virtuosic impression. Breathy and burred in the lower register, with a casual command of multiphonic effects, his playing emanated physicality. Not struggle, though: that part he left off the stage.