

REVIEWS

JOE LOVANO/US FIVE

*Bird Songs*

[Blue Note]

When Joe Lovano decided to record an album interpreting the songs of Charlie Parker, he knew the best approach he could take was to not pretend to be Parker himself. And why should he? Lovano has been one of the most consistently inventive saxophonists in jazz for more than two decades. The melodies and chordal shifts may be as familiar as bebop itself, but *Bird Songs* sounds and feels like what it is: a Joe Lovano record. Lovano's ability to navigate Bird's oft-tricky rhythmic changes and his innate understanding of Parker's moods are apparent from the opening notes of "Passport," but it doesn't take long before he departs from the script (primarily on tenor, as opposed to Bird's trademark alto). From the standard ballad "Lover Man" to the free-flowing "Moose the Mooche" to the 12-minute, album-closing "Yardbird Suite," Lovano and crew channel Bird without worshipping at his feet. —Jeff Tamarkin

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