



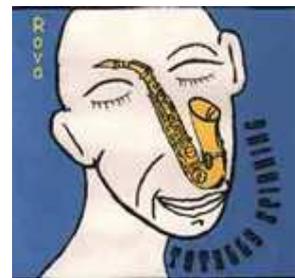
## Totally Spinning

Rova | Black Saint (2006)

By [Jeff Stockton](#)



Depending on your preference among saxophone quartets, Rova (comprised of Larry Ochs, Jon Raskin, Bruce Ackley and Steve Adams) and the World Saxophone Quartet would have to rank numbers 1 and 1A. Rova has always been perceived as the more avant garde of the two, more prone to explorations of abstract sound, closer in spirit (and practice) to Coltrane's *Ascension* than Ellington.



Ten years ago, however, when *Totally Spinning* was recorded, Rova was at its most lyrical. Sure, “Radar 11/19/01” sounds like a four-minute radio transmission from outer space as each saxophone sputters and hums along its own path, the lines only briefly coming into contact with one another to set off a spark. But the rest of the hour is as approachable as Rova gets, an enjoyably listenable point of entry into the work of this groundbreaking veteran group. Raskin (on baritone) gets to carry most of the rhythmic water: his playing on his own “Let’s Go Totally Spinning” is joyous, while on “Stiction” he infuses the tune with casual confidence, as Ochs sidles up on tenor and Ackley and Adams fly above on their higher-pitched horns.

“Cuernavaca Starlight” echoes Mingus’ knack for internal melodic ache as the saxes intertwine in sympathetic harmony, and the comparatively brief “Preshrunk” and “Kick It” are peppy, tight and to the point. On previous Rova albums the fifteen-minute “It’s a Journey, Not a Destination” would seem discursive and intimidating. Here, with its shifting tempos and enchanting tonal moods, spotlighting the impressive intricacies and virtuosity of all four musicians, it defines Rova’s aesthetic.

Track listing: Let's Go Totally Spinning; Stiction; Radar 11/19/01; Cuernavaca Starlight (For Charles Mingus); Kick It; It's a Journey, Not a Destination; Preshrunk; Radar, Version 731.

Personnel: Larry Ochs: tenor and soprano saxophones; Jon Raskin: baritone saxophone; Bruce Ackley: soprano saxophone; Steve Adams: alto and soprano saxophones.

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