

# Mp3 Carl Saunders - Be Bop Big Band

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"Highly recommended, this is one of the best big band albums of the early 21st century." - Scott Yanow, The All Music Guide, allmusic.com 12 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Big Band, JAZZ: Bebop Details: From the liner notes----- Early in 1999, I heard through my friend Scott Englebright that trumpeter Carl Saunders was rehearsing a big band at the union hall in Los Angeles. I had been introduced to Carl's music in 1996 when another friend, John Foss, told me about Carl's first CD. I was already familiar with Carl's big band work, particularly his soloing with Bob Florence, so when Scott told me he had rehearsed with Carl's big band, I immediately placed a call to California. As it happened, Carl had taken his camcorder to a recent rehearsal, so he sent me a videotape and I was hooked. The short version of this story is that we decided to record the band. The long version follows. In many ways this current aggregation is a descendent of Carl's Las Vegas big bands during the 60's, 70's and 80's. As Carl recalls his early years in Las Vegas- "During my last couple of years in high school, my uncle Bobby Sherwood gave me some of his old arrangements, and I started rehearsing a band made up of professional musicians who were working in the show bands. We got copies of some of the things that Bill Holman wrote for Stan Kenton, and at the time, me and my school friends were Kenton freaks. Needless to say we were all groovin', playing these Holman charts-and the professionals were, too. Some of the guys also wrote some charts, so before I knew it, at 17 years old, I had a nice little "kicks band" book and was (kind of) a bandleader. But all I wanted to do was play." Following high school, Carl left Las Vegas at age 18 to play in Stan Kenton's band, after an audition arranged by his mother. Gail Sherwood had been Stan's first singer at the Rendezvous Ballroom in Balboa Beach, after Kenton had been her pianist on her radio show. "Quite a way to start one's career! While on Stan's band, I would sit in different chairs in the band during breaks and copy charts I really liked. With a pencil and small music paper I would copy individual parts, then take them to my hotel room and copy them to manuscript paper with a ballpoint pen. When I returned home to Vegas between tours, we would have new charts to play." But Carl's Las Vegas band also had a wealth of local arranging talent. One of the most treasured among the professionals was the phenomenally talented but little-known (outside of Las Vegas) Herbie Phillips. Phillips had befriended Carl

and played a large part in his development as a musician. Herbie was orphaned as a child in Nebraska. He left home after high school, played trumpet in several "territory bands," spent some time in New York, then settled in Las Vegas in the 1960's. Herbie was a superb jazz trumpeter, but writing music was just as important to him, if not more so. He was occasionally seen furiously writing arrangements during rests while playing in show bands-as you can see if you look closely at the documentary film of Elvis' first appearance at the Las Vegas Hilton. In the late 1980's, he temporarily retired from playing-to devote more time to writing for his own rehearsal band. Though there are a number of tapes floating around, neither Herbie's band nor Carl's band was ever professionally recorded. Until now. Three other arrangers who contributed to this CD were members of these Las Vegas bands-and, like so many big band arrangers, all three are also trombone players. John Boice was a major contributor to the library of Carl's early band, and he is represented here by his beautiful arrangement of Autumn In New York. "John is a wonderful trombonist, who held down the jazz trombone chair when Buddy Rich formed his new band in 1966. He was always in demand as a player because of his great time, impeccable intonation and perfect pitch. When you were sitting next to John it was easy to become one with the music-and there aren't too many of those people around. Anybody who was putting a band together in Vegas in those days always tried to get some of Herbie's and John's charts to play because they were the cats." "We were all making a living playing shows but keeping the jazz alive there by playing in clubs after work. The shows would let out around 1:30 in the morning, so we wouldn't start playing in the clubs until 2:00 or so. Many a time when John, Herbie, and I left a club around 8:00 or 9:00 in the morning, after playing all night, we were still in our gig suits and the sun was blaring down. It was already 100 degrees and we all had black curtains in our bedrooms so we could sleep during the day. The jazz life in a showbiz town!" Carl met Jackson Stock when he came to Las Vegas from Boston's Berklee School of Music in the late 1970's. Jackson wrote arrangements on two of Carl's compositions for this CD-Never Always and I'm All For You. "Jackson had just finished studying composition and orchestration at Berklee, and what a magnificently talented arranger he was-and still is. He lived right around the corner from me, so we did a lot of playing at my house. At the time, John Boice was living in my guesthouse, so I was surrounded by these unknown geniuses." Then in the early 1980's, Carl met John Hall, another gifted trombone player and arranger, now living in Columbus, Ohio. John composed and arranged Dearly Befuddled. Carl moved to Los Angeles in 1984 and joined the Bill Holman band, not as a jazz soloist but as playing the lead trumpet

chair with the intention of providing the band with a jazz concept on the lead book. "It's also fulfilling a childhood dream to play with Holman's band because I've loved the way he writes since I was a kid. I've always thought I could interpret his music just like he intended it to be played. I have now been with his band for 18 years and he hasn't fired me yet, so maybe I'm coming close to what he wants." During the intervening years, Carl has lived and worked almost exclusively in Los Angeles, except for frequent visits to Las Vegas and occasionally musical excursions elsewhere in the US and in Europe. In addition to playing with his own quartet and sextet and the Holman band, Carl is a regular member of the big bands of Bob Florence and Gerald Wilson and the "little big bands" led by Phil Norman, Dave Pell, and Grammy Award winner Anthony Wilson. Orchestrator and composer Johnny Mandel frequently uses Carl on his sessions. At Carl's website, [carlsaunders.com](http://carlsaunders.com), we try to keep as complete a discography of his work as possible. In 1996, Carl released his first recording under his own name. *Out Of The Blue* (SNL Records LLCLCS1) was produced by Carl's friend, Las Vegas trumpeter and nationally known ophthalmologist Loren "Doc" Little. In September 1995, Doc called Carl with the sad news that Herbie Phillips had passed away. Not surprisingly, Herbie was coaching and conducting a college band playing his arrangements when he collapsed and later died of a brain aneurysm. "Buddy Childers, Larry McGuire, Bobby Shew and I-all long-time close friends of Herbie's-went up to Vegas to play in his memorial tribute concert. We played all Herbie Phillips arrangements and compositions. It was a beautiful and special evening-we all soared spiritually and musically. I will never forget how great we all played that night for our dear friend." "Of course his charts have always been an inspiration to all of us anyway. He had been writing all his life, and meticulously doing all the copy work himself. Herbie's long-time girlfriend Barbara Russo was in charge of his estate, and she and I decided I should take his music to LA-to have it played and heard by the great players there and, hopefully, get some of it recorded. Finally, we have realized the dream with this recording." In the years since Herbie's death, Carl has carefully organized the library, repaired damaged parts, lured his Vegas and LA friends to occasional rehearsals and added some new arrangements-but rarely has this music been heard in public. "I've put my band together from time to time here in LA, for a concert or two-and it's always sounded good. It is very satisfying whenever I hear this special music performed, especially by musicians like these. They are among the very best-and I'm proud to call them my friends." The Herbie Phillips arrangements here are *Compilation*, *Perceptive Hindsight*, *Some Bones of Contention*, *Strike Out the Band*, and *An Apple For Christa*-a tribute to the late

teacher-astronaut Christa McAuliffe. All are rich in melody, harmonic structure and imagination. Notice how different each one is from the other, yet they all share the same drive and feeling of striding confidently forward. Like the very best big band charts, they provide not only foot-tapping ensemble passages but even more importantly there is a framework that inspires the soloists. Speaking of soloists, this band is not only a showcase for Carl-who insisted that all the great jazz players in the band be spotlighted. "Most of this trumpet section is made up of gifted jazz soloists . . . Bob Summers . . . clean, articulate. What a trumpet player! To describe his playing properly, one would have to use vulgar language. He is one bad &\*##@ . . . Ron Stout . . . the music scientist. I can't tell you how many times at Bill Holman rehearsals and gigs that Szabo, Summers and I looked at each other in disbelief at some of the things that Ron was playing. He is truly a giant. He knows the ins and outs of the changes better than most of us . . . Bobby Shew . . . Bobby and I became close friends in our early 20's, playing on a lot of different bands in Las Vegas and on the road. We always inspired each other. He always wanted to be a lead player and was, and still is, a good one. I always encouraged him to play jazz when we were young because I heard a lot of soul in his playing. I don't know if my encouragement had anything to do with it but he has developed into a wonderfully melodic jazz soloist. So I made sure that there was solo space on this project for all of these richly talented jazz trumpet players. After all, this is the Be Bop Big Band, which is made up of beboppers." Besides Herbie Phillips, six other arrangers are represented here. We earlier mentioned the work of John Boice (Autumn in New York), Jackson Stock (I'm All For You and Never Always) and John Hall (Dearly Befuddled). LA film music writer Larry Dominello finished his arrangement of Love Dance the day before it was recorded. Bill Rogers and Mike Barone penned the arrangements of Emily and Baby Blues, respectively. "About ten years ago I was playing in Chuck Flores' rehearsal band in his garage and he had a couple of charts in the book that stuck out in my mind. So I asked Chuck who wrote them and he said the piano player, Larry Dominello. I'd been listening to arrangements all my life but I'd never heard anything like this before. Larry's approach to orchestrating is so different than anyone I've ever heard. So much color, beauty and taste. I went up to him that day, introduced myself, and told him if I ever had anything to do with a writing project, he would be on it. So when we did my strings recording a couple of years ago (Eclecticism, SNL Records LLCLCS2), Larry wrote two very special things. As soon as we decided to do this big band recording, I called Larry and we decided on the beautiful Ivan Lins ballad "Love Dance." The rest is future." "My dear and long-time

musical colleague and friend Carl Fontana was scheduled to do some soloing on the CD, but at the last minute he called and said he wasn't feeling well enough to do it. One of the things we had planned for Carl was to be featured on Bill Rogers' arrangement of Johnny Mandel's "Emily." I asked Andy Martin to record it and as you'll hear, he delivered a masterpiece-as he always does." "When Mike Kaiser called me about recording the band, I had just written a piece called "Baby Blues." It is how I perceive a baby would approach the blues. I asked veteran orchestrator and trombone player, Mike Barone to do an arrangement on "Baby Blues" and he agreed. It's kind of a different approach to the blues and his treatment communicates it well." So that's how this thing you hold in your hands came to be. While it's a dream come true for Carl, it's also one for me. They say art isn't easy, but having watched the project come together, it's true that the real artists make it look easy. Just to be in the same studio while these guys were working was an amazing experience-one I'll never forget. Thanks, Carl. Mike Kaiser, May 2002

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