

World Class Digital

Can audio manufacturers break-on through to the other side?

Elliot Kallen takes a listen to new recordings from van den Hul:

- **Four of a Kind: *For the Time Being***

van den Hul VDH99CR01 (Producer: A.J. van den Hul; Engineer: Ir. J.H. van de Weijer)

- **Jeroen de Rijk & Friends: *Central Heating***

van den Hul VDH99CR02 (Producer: A.J. van den Hul; Engineer: Ir. J.H. van de Weijer)

- **Louis van Dijk: *Family and Friends***

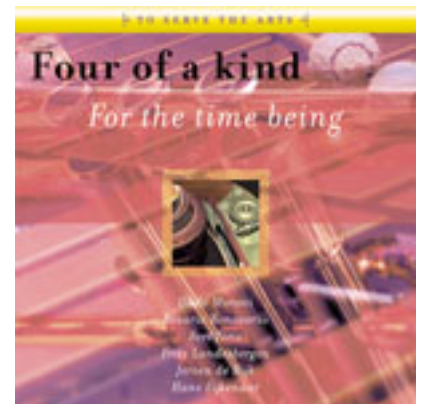
van den Hul VDH99CR03 (Producer: A.J. van den Hul; Engineer: Ir. J.H. van de Weijer)

- **Louis van Dijk: *"I Could Have Danced All Night"***

van den Hul VDH99CR04 (Producer: A.J. van den Hul; Engineer: Ir. J.H. van de Weijer)

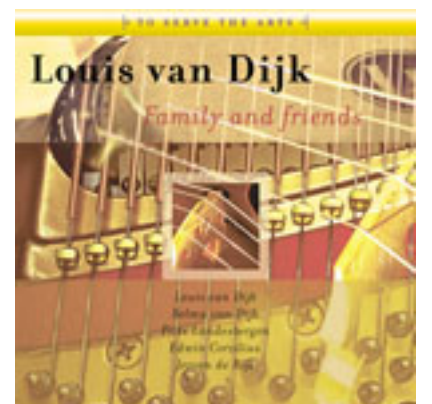
AJ van den Hul is using his label (as many manufacturers do) to promote his carbon-based cables, and the liner notes emphasize the minutiae of the recording chain in painstaking (almost painful) detail, while the musicians are barely mentioned. Too bad, because both of these CDs have some wonderful music and I'd love to know more about the players.

Four of a Kind is built around pianist Dado Moroni and bassist Rosario Bonacorso, effectively showcasing their talents in a variety of settings, from the relaxed swing of "Poinciana" (with Bonacorso taking a Major Holly-style solo, accompanying himself vocally) and "Nite Mist Blues" (Ahmad Jamal, who penned this tune and is closely associated with "Poinciana," is one of Moroni's obvious influences, another being Herbie Hancock), to the quiet, up-tempo percussion surprises of "Limehouse Blues." In fact, for audiophiles, percussionist Jeroen de Rijk may steal much of the show; his inventive punctuations are an essential part of this musical landscape (check out his use of Whirlies on the intro to "Naima").



De Rijk is placed squarely center stage for his own album, *Central Heating*, a series of duets between de Rijk and ten others. Standouts on this one are his pairings with electric guitarist Arnold van Dongen on a lushly-textured "Self-portrait," a rollicking version of Monk's "I Mean You" with pianist Moroni (a bonus track on the CD gives a brief, but revealing sound picture of the duo working out the "feel" of the Monk tune), the title tune — a percussionist's free-for-all with drummer Hans Eijkenaar — and the mysterious "Hard Too Hard," an almost indescribable duet with reed player Arno Bornkamp.

Pianist Louis van Dijk takes his turn in the spotlight for two other van den Hul CDs. The title of the first, *Family and Friends*, makes reference to the inclusion of van Dijk's daughter Selma on this session, as well as a few friends (like above-mentioned percussionist de Rijk) to round things out. Van Dijk's playing style is a little more "tightly wound" than Moroni's, and his classical roots are easily audible on cuts like "Courante," a wonderful, Back-like exercise in multi-voiced counterpoint penned by vibe player Frits Landesbergen (who is also on de Rijk's album), and a neat arrangement of a Vivaldi Allegro. Van Dijk contributes a couple of originals to the mix as well, with "Burjazzque," an up-tempo swinger featuring an intricate unison line played by father and daughter (she on violin), and the album's opener, the buoyant "Salome's Dance." Two Ellington tunes ("Come Sunday," "Mood Indigo") and a pair of Gershwin tunes ("Someone to Watch Over Me," "Our Love is Here to Stay") are also good vehicles for the ensemble.



Van Dijk's second offering, *I Could Have Danced All Night*, effectively pares things down to piano, bass, drums and percussion, and visits much of the same musical landscape. I prefer this less cluttered approach, as it gives the individual voices more of a chance to be heard. In particular, it's really nice to hear bassist Edwin Corzilius clearly, (The liner notes call his circa-1800 instrument an "apple bass," a term I'm not familiar with.) The choice of material is cut from the same cloth as the *Family and Friends*, ranging from Lerner and Loewe's title tune, taken here as a lightly swinging, medium tempo jaunt, to John Lewis' playful "Delauney's Dilemma" and "2 Degrees East 3 Degrees West," as well as more pensive takes on standards like "Autumn in New York" and "It Never Entered My Mind," the melody of the latter a fine example of van Dijk's superb, expressive touch. (De

Rijk shines on this session, too. Check out his cool bongos, man, on "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise.") Don't let the familiar tunes and relaxed feel of the session lull you into taking this stuff for granted as "lounge music," however; there's some excellent, thoughtfully realized music on tap on these silver discs.

All four van den Hul CDs are well recorded, with a good sense of the original recording venue preserved, and the instruments are solidly placed within that space. These are wonderful first efforts, and I look forward to van den Hul expanding the catalog. (Just give us more info on the musicians next time, A.J. !)

Review by: Elliot Kallen

Ultimate Audio Magazine, Spring issue 2000, vol. 4, no. 1

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