

A tribute to Marion Brown

By **HERB BOYD**

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Rather than stroking his violin, Billy Bang plucked it, and rather than emitting powerful tones from his baritone saxophone, Hamiet Bluiett fingered a clarinet. Their vibrant exchange epitomized an unrehearsed moment of music, which is the beauty of improvisation.

A similarly explosive moment occurred between pianist D.D. Jackson and tuba master Bob Stewart as they peppered each other with a filigree of blues passages as they tossed the tune to trumpeter Ahmed Abdullah and drummer Andrew Cyrille.

Toward the end of Abdullah's composition "Eternal Spiraling Spirit," the band was in total synchronicity, and the

club, Sista's Place, an increasingly popular jazz spot in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, was alive with music in commemoration of the late Marion Brown.

Brown, who died in October at age 79, was an original member of the ensemble—then called The Group—which also featured the late bassist Fred Hopkins. Each of the tunes performed bore some semblance to Brown's most notable compositions, particularly "La Placita," when the musicians settled into an extended Latin beat.

But it was "fire music" at its incandescent best, and a few of the veteran listeners were probably reminded of Brown during his first appearances in New York City and that memorable recording date with John

Coltrane on "Ascension."

The tunes were not announced, but that was insignificant because the entire set had a seamless, sonata-like quality with distinctive melodies, lovely solos and triumphant resolutions.

Abdullah's searing trumpet, at times, cut sharply through a density of rhythm, and when he combined with Bluiett's saxophone they left a shattering effect as the lofty music of the past surged through the club.

"Now, this is the kind of music that takes me back to the '60s and '70s, when I really enjoyed jazz," said one excited customer. "I wish I could stay for the second set, but I think this is sufficient for one night of memories."

Brown was a consummate



The Group, of which the late Marion Brown was a former member

(Herb Boyd photo)

artist, an unassuming griot whose mastery of the alto saxophone—his instrument of choice—was evident on a number of recordings. His composition and album "Afternoon of a Georgia Faun" stand as a testament to his vision

and aesthetics.

On this Saturday evening at Sista's Place, the musicians honored one of their fallen brothers, but to speak his name and to play his music—as they did so fervently—is to have him forever with us.