

Bruce Eskovitz Jazz Orchestra:

**(Pacific Coast Jazz)** ★★★★★

"INVITATION"

Here is a nearly flawless recording from someone likely unknown by most jazz fans.

Who is Bruce Eskovitz and where has he been all our listening lives?

All Music Guide ([www.allmusic.com](http://www.allmusic.com)) and other pre-release publicity tell us he's a Los Angeles studio musician and educator, and appears regularly in LA area jazz clubs.

Though age is not mentioned, he is described as a "veteran" jazzman.

On "Invitation," Dr. Eskovitz (jazz musicians with doctorates usually like to make that known) is a saxophonist/flutist, composer and arranger.

He is superb in all capacities, and leads a dektette, or "small" big band comprising five horns and five rhythm. They are, indeed, a lean, mean machine and make a good case for slimmed-down big bands, sounding like a large ensemble, as well as a combo.

The players mirror their leader's talent, energy and spirit, and together and as soloists, soar through a highly varied, exciting and satisfying program of 10 tunes, seven penned by Eskovitz. The CD is full of highlights involving everyone in the band, most of whose names--like the leader's--probably won't be recognized by many, if any, jazz listeners.

Dr. Eskovitz is quite the discovery. A wailing tenor player (he's also heard on soprano sax and alto flute on the CD), with a full-bodied sound, he plays with a jolting urgency, as well as sensitivity.

His compositions reflect the completeness and versatility of his playing: Adventurous, yet accessible; hard driving, yet full of dynamic contrast. His arrangements often are surprising, even stunning, in their originality.

Standout among standouts is the haunting film theme that serves as the CD's title, with its double-time rhythm churning beneath the slowly played theme, a dramatic stop-time or pause, and a scintillating brass section.

There's something for all tastes: Samba, jazz waltz, mambo, guitarist Herb Ellis' transcendent, too seldom heard ballad "Detour Ahead," a boss nova, some bebop (of course), a shuffle blues, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard's fusion hit "Red Clay," and a soulful, closing gospel tune.