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While still living in the Bay Area, tenor saxophonist Jessica Jones met the late Don Cherry when she was part of saxophonist Peter Apfelbaum's Hieroglyphics Ensemble. "Don had a just moved to the area, and he did a gig with us and played some of my tunes," Jones says from Brooklyn, her home for the past seven years. "When I went over to his house a few times, he showed me some music and it was really nice to have that connection."

That connection is made clear on Nod (New Artists), Jones' latest recording with her tenor-sax partner, kindred spirit and husband Tony Jones (they met in high school in Berkeley, later married and started a family and a band). Invert the letters of the CD title and you'll see that, along with the music's intelligent mix of provocative free blowing and more disciplined bop-influenced expression, is a sly tip of the hat to her old Bay Area mentor.

On "Waynopolis" Jones pays tribute to another important influence. "I used to want to be Wayne Shorter with the Art Blakey band – that exact period of time and that exact sound. He's just one of the people that when he plays a note, you absorb it because he takes his time with it. And when I first saw him speak, at the IAJE convention, I found that he talks just like that – totally ethereal and in code. That was really reassuring to me because that's the way I think. I like stuff that you can't really capture but you can feel it. And that's what he strikes me as."

Multitreedist Joseph Jarman also appears on Nod as special guest on his free-boppish sextet piece "Happiness Is," and pianist Connie Crothers (who runs New Artists) provides spiky, percussive piano accompaniment on her postbop burner "Bird's Word." Tony Jones offers a strikingly original, N'awlins flavored arrangement of Jackie McLean's "Little Melonae," and for a complete change of pace, Jones plays piano on a reharmonized rendition of "These Foolish Things," which is sung by her 21-year-old daughter, Candace. Says proud mother Jones, "She's got a beautiful voice. She's moved to New York now and is singing every Monday at the Cotton Club. I'm hoping we can record her next on Connie's label." – Bill Milkowski