

Jazzed

THE JAZZ EDUCATORS MAGAZINE

APRIL/MAY 2015

\$4.99



J.K. Simmons

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Jeremy Pelt

Tales, Musings and Other Reveries
(HighNote)

Jeremy Pelt – trumpet

Simona Premazzi – piano

Ben Allison – bass

Victor Lewis, Billy Drummond – drums



With his latest platter, trumpeter Jeremy Pelt has taken a few of the unwritten conventions of jazz albums and

turned them on their proverbial heads. Most (but not all, naturally) brass-playing leaders are usually accompanied by a saxophonist in what used to be called the “front line”—not here. Further, while many jazz albums include standards (including many overplayed ones but that’s another story), Pelt stacks the deck with some bracing originals and raided the jazz canon for lesser-known gems by jazz legends – in this case, some excellent but little-heard tunes by Clifford Jordan (“Glass Bead Games”) and Wayne Shorter (“Vonetta”). When Pelt does reach into the Great American Songbook, he reaches for a lesser-known number by Jimmy Van Heusen (“I Only Miss Her When I Think of Her”). Finally, while many leaders find one drummer sufficient for a session, Pelt dealt two aces, Victor Lewis and Billy Drummond.

Pelt, for those unfamiliar, is a dazzling mainstream trumpeter – while in no way imitative or derivative, Pelt evokes Kenny Dorham. Like Dorham, he’s got an understated fire with a wide, smooth tone, almost like a flugelhorn. Pelt’s approach has some of the range and crackle of vintage Freddie Hubbard as well. The opener, Jordan’s moody “Glass Bead Games,” has torrid Pelt and thundering drums from Mount Olympus. Pianist Simona Premazzi has a driving, jabbing solo, her key-notes so thick you can almost see them hanging in the ether as they fade. This tune is practically volcanic in its intensity yet the overall effect is bracing rather than overbearing – and while Pelt, Premazzi, Lewis, and Drummond soar and roar they know when to let up and rein it in. Shorter’s “Vonetta” is a ballad

that’s both pretty and ominous – Shorter’s theme and the band’s solos convey pensiveness and wariness while playing pretty. Primazzi’s solo is leisurely and spacious, Pelt tender, the drummers roil like far-away thunder.

The original ballad “Everything You Can Imagine is Real” features Pelt’s transcendently lyrical muted trumpet and a haunting, almost guitar-like solo from bassist Ben Allison. While previously the drummers stormed, here they play delicately, as one. After a brief intro, “Ruminations On Eric Garner” – following in the continuum of the politically-charged works of Charles Mingus and Max Roach – is mostly Pelt and the drummers. Without ever getting dissonant (not that there’s anything wrong with that), the feelings of anger and frustration are palpable – yet in the “outro” “Ruminations...” unexpectedly becomes a bluesy, dirge-like ballad, as if the calm *after* the storm. Speaking of balladry, “I Only Miss Her...” is a virtually classic example of the old-school style à la Miles Davis in the 1950s and Harry “Sweets” Edison anytime. Pelt’s tone is the essence of bitter-sweet remembrance. The closer “The Old Soul of the Modern Day Wayfarer” has a wry, twisty Thelonious Monk-like angularity with a Horace Silver-like warmth. Premazzi’s solo, however, is not Monk-like, though both share a taste for tantalizing economy – she varies the tempo of her solo without interrupting its lyrical flow. Pelt returns to the muted horn again – while the tone evokes Miles in the mid-’50s, the phrasing is wholly his own. While the tempo of “Old Soul...” is relaxed, Lewis and Drummond sound as if they mean to storm a fortress.

Tales... is an exhilarating set of hard bop loaded with contrasts, reminding this writer of the title of a Yusef Lateef album: *Hush ‘n Thunder*. (If the title fits...) There’s great subtlety and there’s a fierceness evoking Art Blakey’s *Jazz Messengers* circa 1964. This platter isn’t just about fine playing and improvising by the participants—the marketplace has many albums with those attributes. This disc shows Pelt is not merely a great trumpeter in the tradition of Dorham, Hubbard, and Davis but an imaginative bandleader and a fascinating, appealing composer. (Mark Keresman)

Russ Nolan

Call It What You Want

(Rhinoceros Music)

Russ Nolan – tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone

Mike Eckroth – piano

Daniel Foose – acoustic bass

Brian Fishler – drums

Yasuyo Kimura – congas, bata drums

Victor Rendon – percussion



Plenty of musicians dabble in Latin jazz, but few go the extra mile with the music, taking the time to

truly study, explore, and experience the various dialects, rhythmic patterns, and dance forms endemic to various Latin American locales. Russ Nolan is one of the few. The New York-based saxophonist is a serious student of Latin American musical cultures and all that comes with them. Over the course of his four previous albums, Nolan managed to establish his jazz bona fides and make his mark by organically fusing jazz with a variety of Latin strains, touching on everything from baião music to Afro-Cuban rhythms. He continues along those lines on *Call It What You Want*, delivering a program of music that focuses on his passion for Latin American musical traditions, jazz, and the marriage of the two. He occasionally strays from the hybrid-making path, exploring relatively straight-ahead swing on “Jazz Is A Four-Letter Word” and taking a modernistic approach on the metrically-shifting “Call It What You Want,” but course deviations are rare. The seven remaining numbers – six originals and a take on “My Ship” that’s built atop a Peruvian Landó – are all Latin jazz amalgamations: “Mi Remedio” is an unhurried cha-cha that presents Nolan’s tenor in its most relaxed state; “Las Teclas Negras” is a funky minor blues packaged as a mambo in seven; “Uncommon Ground” is grounded by the Afro-Colombian mapalé rhythm; “Neruda” shifts from a thoughtful, rhythmically flowing space to a spicier setting; and “Canción Sabrosa” and “Disjunction” serve as fine examples of the mutability of the mambo.

In order to properly render these rhythmically sophisticated works, Nolan needed to look beyond the standard small group jazz configurations. He put together a percussion-heavy sextet – saxophone, piano, bass, drums, and two percussionists – and it works like a charm. Nolan’s tenor is confident, saying a lot without saying too much, and his soprano, alternately curious and passionate, proves to be an intriguing alternative; pianist Mike Eckroth brings the heat whether circling around on a montuno, delivering sparkling solos, or providing firm support; bassist Daniel Foote cuts loose on occasion and lays down bedrock riffs that prove to be the backbone of many a section of music; and the team of drummer Brian Fishler and percussionists Yasuyo Kimura and Victor Rendon creates intricate Latin jazz rhythmic latticework that flows and ripples below the surface. Each individual player does their fair share of the heavy lifting, but they also mesh exceptionally well with the others. This sextet manages to make strong statements without being needlessly showy. It’s that strength and sense of teamwork that help to make *Call It What You Want* such a success. (Dan Bilawsky)

Joey Calderazzo

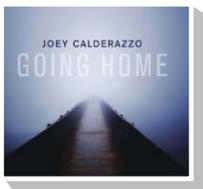
Going Home (Sunnyside)

Joey Calderazzo – piano

Orlando le Fleming – bass

Adam Cruz – drums

Branford Marsalis – tenor saxophone (one track only)



So many piano trio platters and only so much time and money – but there is an upside to this quandary. Joey Calderazzo, the regular 88’s player for the Branford Marsalis Quartet, has crafted an album of acoustic threesome jazz so swell it just might raise the bar for this ever-popular context a wee bit.

Stylistically, Calderazzo reminds to a certain extent of Herbie Hancock and pre-*Return To Forever* Chick Corea – incredible technique that’s never displayed for its own sake and so cordially lyrical this writer would recommend this set

to jazz novices. The album kicks off with “Manifold,” which begins as a ballad, but it’s the proverbial calm before the storm. It gradually picks up steam into a rollicking first-class in which Calderazzo gets in touch with his inner Bud Powell with his mercurial, slightly percussive, resounding-note runs. The bass/drums team of Orlando le Fleming and Adam Cruz conjure a perfect storm of swing, Cruz crackling like distant lightning, le Fleming not as prominent in the mix but he’s got a pliant throb that you’d miss if it weren’t there. There’s plenty of dynamics as this “Manifold” sucks down Highway 61 like nobody’s business. Beginning as a duet, “I Never Knew” features a guest spot from Branford Marsalis, who displays *such* tender balladry in the Coleman Hawkins/Ben Webster vein while Calderazzo waxes mysterious and sparsely alongside – le Fleming and Cruz come in like morning light while gradually turning up the intensity, spurring Marsalis to surge like a storm-swelled river while maintaining the wistfulness factor.

If jazz tunes were still being issued as 45 RPM records, the pick-to-click hit would be “One Way” – it’s got a slyly cool, slightly loping melody and hints of New Orleans rhythms courtesy of Mr. Cruz. Calderazzo accomplishes a neat trick here, combining/reconciling the wry minimalism of Thelonious Monk with the old-school funk/soul-jazz swagger of Gene Harris. The album concludes with the sublime, unaccompanied “Going Home,” elegiacally paced and laced with strands of Southern gospel (one night I played this track three times within an hour).

At risk of invoking the Big H (for hyperbole), *Going Home* is practically everything a mainstream jazz album should be – aces-high and economical musicianship; elegant, swinging, melodious, inventive, and gregarious, with a group that plays with the unity of a band. (Mark Keresman)

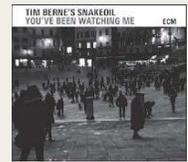
To have album and DVD releases considered for inclusion in future installments of Hot Wax, email Christian Wissmuller: cwissmuller@timelesscom.com.

APRIL 14

Tim Berne

(ECM Records)

You’ve Been Watching Me



APRIL 28

Cecil Taylor

Conquistador!



MAY 4

Boney James

(Concord)

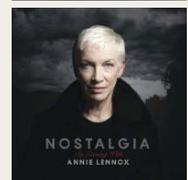
Futuresoul



Annie Lennox

(Blue Note)

Nostalgia: An Evening With Annie Lennox



Cassandra Wilson

(Legacy)

Coming Forth By Day

MAY 5

John Coltrane

(Capitol)

Blue Train



Larry Coryell

(Wide Hive Records)

Heavy Feel



Miles Davis

(Import)

Birth of the Cool

Chet Baker

(Import)

Sings

MAY 12

Vincent Herring

(Smoke Sessions Records)

Night and Day



Lenny Breau

(Wounded Bird Records)

Velvet Touch of Lenny Breau Live (Wounded Bird 2015 Reissue)

