

NEW ISSUES

NIGHT-TIME, DAYTIME REQUIEM /
BALLAD FOR BERNT / DIRGE FOR
EUROPE / ASTIGMATIC / ELUTKA
/ PRAYER AND QUESTION /
LITANIA / ANUBIS. 59:43.

Russ Johnson, tpt, flgh; Krzysztof
Medyna, ts, ss; Andrzej Winnicki,
p; Scott Colley, b; Nasheet Waits,
d. April 2009, Brooklyn, NY.

with Winnicki, who wrote two of the pieces here as well: "Elutka" is a nicely impressionistic piece, with Sorey sounding terrific, and "Anubis" swaggers in a second Miles kind of way. Their interaction is particularly crucial on the superb reading of "Ballad for Bernt." But the horns are great too, smoldering during the rise and fall of the opener. Elsewhere, Johnson sounds fantastic (shifting back and forth with the mute) on "Dirge," taking flight and taking root. Medyna's soprano brings even more heat and momentum to the crashing version of "Astigmatic" (where Sorey sounds just outrageously good). As intense as the music can get, the band sounds like they have their hearts more audibly in the wistful "Litania" and similar materials. A fine disc.

Jason Bivins

1) JEREMY PELT MEN OF HONOR

HIGHNOTE 7203

BACKROAD / MILO HOWARD /
BROOKLYN BOUND / DANNY
MACK / FROM A LIFE OF THE
SAME NAME / ILLUSION /
US-THEM / WITHOUT YOU. 45:59.

Pelt, tpt; J.D. Allen, ts; Danny
Grissett, p; Dwayne Burno, b;
Gerald Cleaver, d. Aug 1, 2009,
Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

There is a whiff of nostalgia for the heyday of Bebop songcraft about Jeremy Pelt's CD *Men of Honor* (1). His aim is create a band of brothers to perform well-constructed original compositions, just as his forebears did in the 1950s and 1960s, that is, before the forces first of Free Jazz and then fusion disrupted the Jazz mainstream. That sense of picking up where Bebop left off fueled the Young Lions phenomenon of almost three decades ago. But more and more, despite the refinements, it's evident the Bebop form, while still having creative adherents, is in a state of stasis. Even a session as well thought-out and formed as this one—with all its fine writing and playing—seems suspended in time. The musicians intently play variations on echoes from a previous time.

Those are certainly enjoyable to listen to. Leader Pelt has supplied half the compositions and then solicited one each from his cohorts. They provide the three ballads—"Brooklyn Bound" by saxophonist J.D. Allen, "From a Life of the Same Name" by drummer Gerald Cleaver, and the closer, the wistful "Without You" by pianist Danny Grissett. Bassist Dwayne Bruno with the opener "Backroad" sets the tone of the session. The melody is a declamatory statement that moves in and out of a minor key (shades of Booker Little), and the harmonic structure includes suspensions that help set up sections of straightahead blowing. Cleaver's ballad also demonstrates structural imagination as the groove incorporates silent spaces. Pelt's own compositions concentrate on modes of modern Swing. "Danny Mack" especially makes use of Cleaver's dynamic drumming. The musicians are well suited to the material presented to them. Allen darts and dances through the harmonies,

2) BRAD FELT FIRST CALL

LAUNCH CONTROL 475

1. FIRST CALL / 2. THE TRUTH
ABOUT YOU / 3. EMPATHIC
/ 4. SURFACE DWELLERS / 5.
INVOCATION / 6. EXPLODE THE
MODULAR / 7. IF YOU CAME
TO ME FOR LOVE / 8. HIGH
CONTRAST. 72:12.

Felt, euph; Steve Wood, ts, ss;
Gary Schunk, p; Nick Calandro, b;

NEW ISSUES

Bill Higgins, d. 1-3, 8:
Apr 22, 2008, Dearborn, MI; 4-7:
July 21, 2008, Detroit, MI.

3) ERICA LINDSAY & SUMI TONOOKA INITIATION

ARC 2000

MARI / MINGUS MOOD /
SOUTH STREET / INITIATION /
SERPENT'S TALE / IN THE VOID
/ SOMEWHERE NEAR HEAVEN /
BLACK URGENCY / THE GIFT /
YES. 70:15.

Lindsay, ts; Tonooka, p; Rufus
Reid, b; Bob Braye, d. Oct 19-23,
2004, Woodstock, NY.

4) TOM GULLION CARSWELL

TOM GULLION NO#

1. CARSWELL / 2. MONKEY'S
TALE / 3. HOT TIN ROOF /
4. MELLOWING INTRO / 5.
MELLOWING / 6. OVERFLOWING
/ 7. RIGHT ON TIME / 8.
ANOTHER PLACE AND TIME / 9.
FUTUREPROOF / 10. UPTOWN.
55:50.

Gullion, ts, ss, a flt, b c); David
Cooper, tpt, flgh (2,4,5,7,9); Tim
Whalen, el p (2,4,5,7,9); Vijay
Tellis-Nayak, p, el p (1,3,6,8,10);
Mark Urness (2,4,5,7,9), Shawn
Sommer (1,3,6,8,10); Dane
Richeson, d (2,4,5,7,9); Ernie
Adams, d, perc (1,3,6,8,10). Aug
21, 2008, La Crosse, WI (2,4,5,7,9);
Jan 26-28, 2009,
Chicago, IL (1,3,6,8,10).

sending shards of melodies shaped from the chordal extensions into orbit. Pelt's trumpet probes the interiors of the song, accentuating their cadences and diversions. For all its evocation of earlier sounds, what this music really begs for is airing before live audiences. I can only hope Pelt and his colleagues get that opportunity.

(2) Brad Felt's *First Call* covers the same stylistic territory as Pelt's session, but comes from a very different place geographically. Felt and colleagues hail from the Detroit area scene where Felt is an accomplished composer and euphonium player. It's strange that euphonium has such a low profile in Jazz given attempts to incorporate all manner of horns and plucked things into the Jazz palette. Euphonium is truly a beautiful instrument with a round, golden tone that blends well with other horns. Only Kiane Zawadi (Bernard McKinney), interestingly also from Detroit, made anything of a name for himself on the horn. Given that Zawadi played very much in the style Felt favors, I wonder about the influence. Felt's playing brings all the horn's qualities to the fore. His tone is resonant, his articulation clear and firm. That's all the better for expressing clear, logical musical lines. His playing seems very much of a piece with the compositions, all his. These sound like pieces from a larger body of work selected to fit together for this recital. They have attractive melodies and harmonic structures that would entice an improviser. He's brought together a strong ensemble to realize the compositions. Saxophonist Steve Wood and pianist Gary Schunk are well-respected players in the area, and prove that first-rate players exist outside those select few metro areas that get most of the press. I suspect most of these will be sold off the stand and to friends, fans, and colleagues, but this is music well worth seeking out by others outside the area.

(3) *Initiation* is a no-frills modern Jazz date, just a horn with rhythm blowing originals that evoke Coltrane, Shorter, and give a celebratory nod to Mingus. There are calculated forays into freer materials balanced by languorous ballads. Erica Lindsay has a full, slightly grainy tone that effectively evokes the longing of "Somewhere Near Heaven" and "The Gift." And on the easy swing of "South Street" Tonooka glides over the keys, limning the harmonies. At times she punctuates this with two-handed outbursts. Still her playing often fades into the sound, pleasant, but not deeply affecting. Not fading into the background are the two rhythm members. Reid is solid as ever, contributing a probing solo on "Mingus Moods." The late Bob Braye is aggressive without being intrusive, and his few solos add a bit of welcomed broil to a session that's set on simmer much of the time.