



The Cookers Time And Time Again

MOTÉMA 159

★★★★★

On their fourth disc, this Magnificent Seven of gutsy acoustic jazz delivers their most diverse outing yet. As a supergroup of star veterans, they could have easily slapped charts on the stands and come up with tremendous blowing sessions. But these gunners are not mercenary loners. The Cookers were born a true teamwork band, and that identity is even stronger now.

The group's superlative soloing is kept at modest length, skillfully serving the exhilarating, shifting arrangements while the ensemble has a

Fredrik Kronkvist Reflecting Time

CONNECTIVE 36533

★★★★½

A strong and persuasive Scandi-Gotham pact is made on this second release by the commanding, mainstreaming Swedish alto saxist Fredrik Kronkvist featuring the taut American rhythm section of pianist Aaron Goldberg, bassist Reuben Rogers and drummer Gregory Hutchinson (known, among other things, for their rapport as bandmates for Joshua Redman). Kronkvist is well studied and honestly expressive in the ways of American jazz, as a versatile horn player and sturdy penner of tunes in acknowledged jazz idioms from the New York side of the Atlantic.

He pays tribute to Mulgrew Miller with the neo-hard-bopping energy of the opener, "Meltdown Blues (Grew's Blues)," and bows in the respectful direction of one of his heroes, Stanley Turrentine, on the medium-heat "Likely." Attention is paid to the importance of varying the set, album-wise: The bluesy swing swager of the Adderley-esque "Cannonballism" segues into the uptempo intensity and rollercoaster head on "Straight To The Point," in contrast to the following track, a luminously reharmonized take on "In A Sentimental Mood." He channels the Turrentine/Adderley *joie de vivre* factor on the soft-edged closer, "Right Here Right Now."

Throughout, Kronkvist's soloing is informed by drive and clarity of focus, and a settled-in

startling fullness, sounding more like a little big band. Although the gritty foundation of '60s hard-bop is in its DNA, the band's goal lies more in forwarding the momentum that many of the senior members ignited in the '70s: expanding on the '60s language with varied grooves and a widened harmonic palette.

On the opener, "Sir Galahad," tenor saxophonist Billy Harper wastes no time, leaping into a huge-throated solo on full pistons. Even at that intensity, Harper *still* manages to build upwards. Trumpeter David Weiss, who arranged the majority of tunes, delivers a thriller solo on "Double Or Nothing," and trumpeter Eddie Harrison packs bluesy punch on "Slippin And Slidin'."

New member Donald Harrison—who succeeds Craig Handy on alto sax—proves himself a valuable addition, unleashing urgent cascading streams on "Renada." Bassist Cecil McBee lays down his fat tone and bedrock grooves, supported by Billy Hart's driving yet intuitively open drumming. Pianist George Cables is a fount of endless ideas and his effortless comping meshes every groove. His tribute composition "Farewell Mulgrew" is a moving highlight.

No veteran re-hashing here. Each successive Cookers disc is increasingly fiery and forward-reaching.

—Jeff Potter

Time And Time Again: Sir Galahad; Renada; Slippin' And Slidin'; Double Or Nothing; Farewell Mulgrew; Three Fall; Time And Time Again; Dance Of The Invisible Nymph; Dance Eternal Spirits Dance. (61:47)

Personnel: Billy Harper, tenor sax; Eddie Henderson, David Weiss, trumpet; Donald Harrison, alto sax; George Cables, piano; Cecil McBee, bass; Billy Hart, drums.

Ordering info: motema.com



technical facility that impresses without getting caught up in showboating for its own sake. And the group-think seems perfectly in tune, perhaps partly because the recording was made in Copenhagen, after touring around Sweden and Denmark and honing the ensemble mesh. Whereabouts and heritages aside, Reflecting Time is a fine piece of straightahead jazz-making, tasteful, historicist and fiery in the right degrees.

—Josef Woodard

Reflecting Time: Meltdown Blues (Grew's Brew); Likely; Embraced; Cannonballism; Straight To The Point; In A Sentimental Mood; Stay All The Way; Right Here Right Now. (50:19)

Personnel: Fredrik Kronkvist, alto saxophone; Aaron Goldberg, piano; Reuben Rogers, bass; Gregory Hutchinson, drums.

Ordering info: connectiverecords.com

Louis Sclavis Quartet
Silk And Salt Melodies

ECM



Louis Sclavis Quartet Silk And Salt Melodies

ECM 2402

★★★★★

Blurring the line between the dreamy and the edgy, French clarinetist Louis Sclavis' 10th ECM album joins chamber music, folkloric motifs, Gallic insouciance and Persian rhythms in a soundscape that keeps one off-balance yet enthralled. The recording is pristine no matter the cast of the tune, spanning the jaunty folk dance of "Dust And Dogs," the itchy orientalism of "Cortège" and the eerie white noise (or are those bird calls?) of "Prato Plage," the closing snippet.

Respectful of the silence that partially defines Sclavis' music and sequenced for maximum drama, *Silk And Salt Melodies* takes the listener to fresh, piquant places. It is an intellectually satisfying album in which Sclavis shares his eclectic, rangy tunes with Benjamin Moussay on acoustic, electric and treated keyboards, the note-bending, spare guitarist Gilles Coronado and Persian percussionist Keyvan Chemirani, a master of the goblet drum, or zarb. Their blend, which often relies on unison voicing and repetition, is singular, and even though the album is nominally Sclavis', the other players have plenty of room.

Eight of the nine pieces are long and complex, particularly "Sel et Soie," the jittery, sultry title track, and "Dance For Horses/Des Feux Lointains," the fifth and sixth tunes, to be listened to as if they were one. While it is difficult to pin down what instruments are being played—some cuts seem to feature Sclavis on bass clarinet, others on the higher-register B-flat or A clarinets—one can only surrender to the sound. And while several tunes are languorous, like the chanson-like "L'autre Rive" and "Le Parfum de L'exil," the exotic, Middle Eastern opening track, others pop, even approaching rock: "Cortège" segueing into "Dust And Dogs" ratchets up the tension and, one might dare say, the joy. Sclavis, who says this album aims to conjure an "imaginary, nomadic Central Asian route," knows how to make enigmatically exciting.

—Carlo Wolff

Silk And Salt Melodies: Le Parfum de L'exil; L'homme Sud; L'autre Rive; Sel et Soie; Dance For Horses; Des Feux Lointains; Cortège; Dust And Dogs; Prato Plage.

Personnel: Louis Sclavis, clarinets; Gilles Coronado, guitar; Benjamin Moussay, piano, keyboard; Keyvan Chemirani, percussion.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com