



Kneebody *You Can Have Your Moment*

WINTER & WINTER 910 165

★★★★½

On its third album, the hard-hitting quintet Kneebody invests heavily in groove, which isn't such a difficult thing to do when your post-bop is already so deeply inflected with post-rock, fusion and rhythmic ideas nabbed from hip-hop. (On the other hand, it might be a little strange when you consider that its 2009 collaboration with vocalist Theo Bleckmann scored a Grammy nomination in the classical crossover category for a collection of Charles Ives songs). My initial impression of the music left me focusing on the gritty, intensely cohesive ensemble work—I could barely remember that there were plenty of solos—which in this case is a positive accomplishment. The rigorous compositions from the band's members generally weave multiple sections together with seamless yet bold transitions, and with most of the tunes by trumpeter Shane Endsley and keyboardist Adam Benjamin there are subtle variables and cue systems that give the pieces an alluring flexibility when performed live.

Drummer Nate Wood, electric bassist Kaveh Rastegar and keyboardist Benjamin carve out huge, steadily morphing grooves that usually support plangent, sophisticated melodic shapes that give up their essence calmly. The horns of Endsley and reedist Ben Wendel frequently provide contrapuntal richness and additional harmonic depth, with improvised passages perfectly woven into the fabric of ensemble sound. While Kneebody really digs tricky, rhythmically disorienting grooves like the ones on "No Thank You Mr. West" or "Nerd Mountain," they can also handle more gentle ones with the requisite patience and sensitivity. I could use a bit more space in the thick arrangements, but sounding gauzy couldn't be further from Kneebody's concerns here.

—Peter Margasak

You Can Have Your Moment: Teddy Ruxpin; Held; The Entrepreneur; No Thank You Mr. West; You Have One Unheard Message; The Blind; You Can Have Your Moment; Desperation Station; Nerd Mountain; Call; Unforeseen Influences; High Noon. (55:16)

Personnel: Adam Benjamin, Fender Rhodes, effects; Shane Endsley, trumpet, effects; Kaveh Rastegar, electric bass, effects; Ben Wendel, saxophone, melodica, effects; Nate Wood, drums.

Ordering info: winterandwinter.com

Jeremy Siskind *Simple Songs For When The World Seems Strange*

BROOKLYN JAZZ
UNDERGROUND 020

★★★★

Like his mentor Fred Hersch, Jeremy Siskind likes to tread the ground between jazz and art music, unafraid to wear his heart on his sleeve or to subjugate swing in favor of languid lyricism. On "Little Love Song"—one of three pieces to feature vocalist Jo Lawry—Siskind melds a ripe melody line with lyrics that remind you that he has a master's in English. It seems to be something that might've come out of a Stephen Sondheim musical, yet Siskind's trio—which plays on half the recording—features Chris Lightcap and Ted Poor, two of the most interesting rhythm section players in contemporary improvisation. He wraps everything up with a seemingly unironic take on "The Candy Man."

The paradox of Siskind's ability to shift shapes and dodge expectations lingers throughout his sophomore recording, but there is also



a sense of purpose, which keeps it from sounding like a pastiche by a prodigiously talented young musician.

As a soloist, Siskind is impossible to pigeonhole, delving into stride on "The Inevitable Letdown," exploring some pretty, quiet counter-movement on "Venice" and channeling Glenn Gould (down to the glottal noise) on the wistful "Audrey's Song." Fronting his trio,

he sounds more modern, building to muscular climaxes on the title composition and "A Single Moment" and riding herd over a relentless martial rhythm on "Firstness."

From Brad Mehldau to Ethan Iverson, plenty of younger pianists tread similar territory, but Siskind distinguishes himself in his duo work with Lawry. In that setting, he seems even less wedded to the jazz continuum. "Hymn Of Thanks" draws on English church tradition, and their work on "Six Minute Tango" would fit well in a cabaret. In the end, Siskind seems happy to go his own way.

—James Hale

Simple Songs For When The World Seems Strange: Venice; The Fates; Hymn Of Thanks; Firstness; Audrey's Song; Six Minute Tango; The Inevitable Letdown; Simple Song (For When The World Seems Strange); A Single Moment; Little Love Song; The Candy Man. (55:39)

Personnel: Jeremy Siskind, piano; Jo Lawry, vocals (3, 6, 10); Chris Lightcap, bass (2, 4, 8, 9, 11); Ted Poor, drums (2, 4, 8, 9, 11).

Ordering info: bjurecords.com

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