



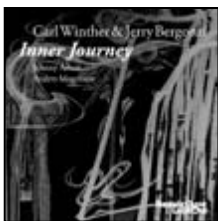
More Powerful
George Colligan (Whirlwind)
by Matthew Kassel

“Whistle Ball”, the first track on *More Powerful*, is more powerful than its title suggests. It’s a force right out of the gate, with a brisk, stop-time introduction lasting only about 30 seconds, until George Colligan takes over with a splashy solo, setting the mood for most of the record. This is Colligan’s 28th album as a leader, a lot for any recording musician. But for a 48-year-old jazz pianist—and occasional drummer and trumpeter—it’s kind of ungodly. To his credit, Colligan isn’t a conceptualist. What he is is a workhorse, who is always writing new songs and moving forward. He knows how to lead a recording session without being glib or commanding.

He is accompanied by drummer Rudy Royston, a longtime collaborator, bassist Linda May Han Oh and saxophonist Nicole Glover, a former student of Colligan from Portland State University. They run through these finely constructed postbop compositions, all of which were written by the leader, with aplomb. Though this is a Colligan production through and through, his bandmates aren’t relegated to the background: Royston holds the group together with fleet-fingered power; Oh takes several lovely solos, her sound woody and distinct; Glover’s guttural braying on soprano and tenor often evokes Coltrane.

Colligan is at his best when he’s working his way through a fast-paced, straightforward swing rhythm though there are moments that give the listener a subtler sense of his sound and style. For instance, on the second track, “Waterfall Dreams”, Colligan plays a series of liquid chords that in many ways recall Keith Jarrett’s open-hearted approach. As the album nears its end, there are more opportunities to hear this side of Colligan. The record gets slower, darker and a little more rhythmically free as it reaches its end. “Southwestern Silence” and “Empty”, for example, are particularly contemplative and even occasionally spooky. But they are no less powerful because of that.

For more information, visit whirlwindrecordings.com. Colligan is at *Smoke* Mar. 29th. See Calendar.



Inner Journey
Carl Winther/Jerry Bergonzi (SteepleChase Lookout)
by Ken Dryden

Carl Winther, a talented young pianist, is one of the many European musicians who record regularly on the continent yet only sporadically get the opportunity to play in the U.S. This son of late Danish trumpeter Jens Winther is well on the way to making a name for himself, having won several awards in Europe. This studio session pairs him with veteran tenor saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi, supported by bassist Johnny Åman and drummer Anders Mogensen. The foursome are hardly strangers, having recorded earlier dates for Savant and Stunt and have also shared the stage during the

saxophonist’s trips to perform in Europe. The entire date is devoted mostly to the leaders’ strong originals and the quartet devours them all.

Winther proves to be a capable partner for the usually hard-blowing saxophonist, though he also is able to bring out some of Bergonzi’s lyrical side. Winther’s “Talisman” takes a little time to simmer as the co-leaders play a tantalizing unison line, showcasing Bergonzi’s boisterous, inventive improvising and Winther’s superb postbop chops. “Requiem For JW” is a heartfelt tribute to Winther’s father, a moving elegy opening with searching, unaccompanied horn before the piece transforms into a sauntering samba powered by Bergonzi’s anguished tone. The pianist’s breezy “KMA” is perfect fodder for the energetic flights of Bergonzi, who contributed the bluesy “Bar None”, which conjures the feeling of lost love through his keening sound. Mogensen penned the equally mournful “Wheel of Fortune”, which features a sparse piano solo and emotional saxophone outburst, supported beautifully by the rhythm section. Winther’s miniature “Long Gone” is just as intense, piano coming in waves behind saxophone, conveying a sense of loneliness amid turmoil, fueled by darting bass and sparse percussion. Winther’s robust “Golem” finishes the session with a flourish, highlighted by its playful, twisting theme. With the strong chemistry throughout this record date, it is a safe bet that Winther, Bergonzi and company will cross paths again in the near future.

For more information, visit steeplechase.dk. Bergonzi is at *Jazz at Kitano* Mar. 10th. See Calendar.



Bird's Eye View
Turtle Island Quartet (Azica)
by Tyran Grillo

The Turtle Island Quartet presents a new program centered on the spirit of Charlie Parker. Although only one of his tunes is included, these four impeccable musicians share Bird’s penchant for expanding parameters and the results of their alchemy are just as golden. Like the other jazzy ingots herein—namely, “Subconscious-Lee” (Lee Konitz) and “Miles Ahead” (Miles Davis)—“Dewey Square” makes artful use of extended techniques. Violinist/founder David Balakrishnan employs scratch tones for a delightfully percussive effect while cellist Malcolm Parson (who, along with violinist Alex Hargreaves, is new to the group) plays the role of bassist via robust pizzicato. The in-house arrangements alone boast of interdisciplinary genius at play, allowing for plenty of improvisation to show the quartet’s combinatory properties.

The Modern Jazz Quartet’s “Django” gets a welcome spin and in its central section evokes the fluidity of Stéphane Grappelli, whom Balakrishnan calls a “patron saint” of the quartet. Yet Balakrishnan’s own compositions are the support beams of this soundly engineered structure. They sometimes reveal an underlying quirkiness, as in his “Rebirth of the Holy Fool”, which puns on Davis’ *Birth of the Cool*, and “Squawk”, taking its inspiration from a mysterious incident in 2011 when the town of Beebe, Arkansas awoke on New Year’s Day to find that 5,000 dead blackbirds had fallen from the sky. The composer navigates these images with delicate rigor. His “Aeroelasticity: Harmonies of Impermanence”, however, is the album’s centerpiece. A multivalent suite in four movements, it hums with the very

propulsive energies that inspired it. Influences range from Indian classical music to mathematical properties (the piece is, after all, dedicated to his father, a UCLA professor of engineering), bringing solid returns on his emotional investments. There’s a backwater charm lurking within and a feeling of memory tying it all together. Violist Benjamin von Gutzeit’s “Propeller” is something of a sister piece, as it deals equally with mechanisms in motion, if on a more intimate scale. Its balance of curves and straights is emblematic of what this quartet is capable of at its finest.

For more information, visit azica.com. This project is at *The Cutting Room* Mar. 9th. See Calendar.

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