

Get The Blessing OCDC

NAIM 170

★★★

Get The Blessing is part of a new wave of British bands—Led Bib and Troyka being among the most praised—that bring together grooves and rock elements to revitalize a genre and bring in a younger audience. *OCDC* is its third album and its appeal resides mostly in the thick bass lines that are the backbones of most of the quartet's compositions.

It gets to an excellent start with the title track, an infectious and powerful opener. It is followed by "American Meccano," a lovely ballad elevated by Robert Wyatt's guest appearance and hummed or non-lexical vocals. Both tunes testify to the band's knack for hooks and validate its concept. The streak, however, is not quite maintained. The tunes are well constructed, make effective use of the varied instrumentation and rely on a fair amount of unpredictability, but their looseness then veers excessively toward nonchalance and fails to underscore the quality of the melodies or vamps.

The foursome still manages to close with another winner. "Pentopia" is a loop-based piece that acts as a tribute to modern-day composers enamored with repetitive structures. Indeed, it suggests a bubbly Philip Glass and is complete with a nod to Steve Reich's *Clapping Music*.

—Alain Drouot

OCDC: OCDC; American Meccano; Torque; Adagio In Wot Minor; Between Fear And Sex; The Waiting; Low Earth Orbit; Pentopia. (44:25)

Personnel: Jim Barr, bass guitar, baritone guitar; Clive Deamer, drums; Pete Judge, trumpet, flugelhorn, melodica, flutes, synthesizer, effects; Jake McMurchie, saxophones, vibraphone, piano (1), effects; Robert Wyatt, vocals; Adrian Utley, guitar; Clair Hiles, piano (3); Richard Barnard, piano arrangement (3).

Ordering info: naimjazz.com

Jure Pukl Abstract Society

STORYVILLE 1014274

★★★★

The penultimate track on Slovenian saxophonist Jure Pukl's sixth CD, "The Mind And The Soul," proceeds in a series of tidal crashes and lingering dissipations, lunging unison figures dissolving into fading contrails. The piece feels like an exhalation after the eight tension-filled tunes that precede it, a momentary respite before the full relief initiated by Damián Reid's explosive drum solo at the outset of closer "7 Up (aka Trio Joy)."

The title of Pukl's latest, *Abstract Society*, is apt given the company he chooses to keep. With Reid and pianist Vijay Iyer, the Berklee grad finds sidemen who provide a connection to M-Base founder Steve Coleman and his immediate disciples, angular thinkers like Rudresh Mahanthappa and Steve Lehman. His compositions follow severe pathways, often establishing a tug-of-war with Iyer's percussive force. Pukl's soprano leaps over the avalanching rhythms of opener "Circle Mind," while his tenor climbs in Sisyphean ascents on "The Force." He builds "Waterfalls" on the contrast between an ominous honking and the lushness that relieves it, though even here Reid maintains a nervous, caffeinated pulse. "Random Logic" is a cubist kaleidoscope, furthering abstracting its Thelonious Monk-like theme through tumbling, stuttering outbursts.

—Shaun Brady

Abstract Society: Circle Mind; Waterfalls; Abstract Society; Random Logic; Intermission; Sir Dracula; O.M.; The Force; Sequence II; The Mind And The Soul; 7 Up (aka Trio Joy). (69:37)

Personnel: Jure Pukl, tenor and soprano saxophones; Vijay Iyer, piano; Joe Sanders, bass; Damián Reid, drums.

Ordering info: storyvillerecords.com



Darts & Arrows Eyes Of The Carnival

SELF RELEASE

★★★

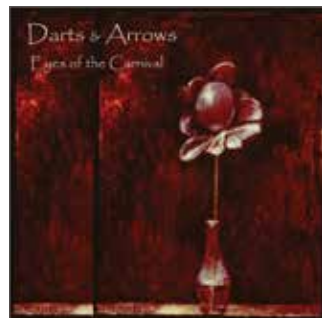
On this album by his quartet Darts & Arrows, guitarist Bill MacKay not only goes against the grain of Chicago's jazz and improvised music scenes, but he flouts much of the music created over the last three-and-a-half decades by embracing the jazz-rock sound of the mid-'70s. What distinguishes this band from those hirsute heavies of yore is an appealing sense of space and proportion. The six tunes—all but one written by MacKay—rarely get bogged down in technical excess. The rhythm section of bassist Kyle Hernandez and drummer Quin Kirchner shapes the grooves with a limber sense of swing often missing in first-generation jazz-rock. While "Outcry" suffers from an overload of zigzagging unison passages played by MacKay and electric pianist Ben Boye, most of the arrangements are pleasingly lean. The middle section is given to a pair of moody ballads: Boye's "Frequent Vacation" is a probing excursion that avoids tidy resolution. The most arresting piece is "Slipping Through My Fingers," which opens with Boye delivering distended son montuno patterns before the tune revs up with cascading arpeggios that recall something by Tortoise.

—Peter Margasak

Eyes Of The Carnival: Ivy; Outcry; Frequent Vacation; Mystic; Slipping Through My Fingers; Film Music No. 2. (32:43)

Personnel: Bill MacKay, guitar; Ben Boye, keyboards; Kyle Hernandez, bass; Quin Kirchner, drums.

Ordering info: billmackay.com



Peter Madsen's Seven Sins Ensemble Gravity Of Love

PLAYSCAPE 121911

★★★★

Pianist/keyboardist Peter Madsen has a worthy contribution to make to the Third Stream jazz tradition. He likes rich instrumental color as much as he does jazz rhythm, and

he's able to strike a balance between the two. The writing proceeds in a linear fashion with organic and often sensual movement. There's no hint of "exercise" or "sketch" in these tunes. The changing colors and the swelling and subsiding dynamics are what animates the music.

The ensemble on *Gravity Of Love* is essentially a jazz quartet with a complementary string quartet. The rhythm section is sensitive to dynamics yet it's virile, with Herbert Walser's trumpet and flugel playing lyrically or forcefully as needed. The string section usually supports the rhythm section, like the gauzy background figures that waft behind Madsen's piano on "Jealousy." Though there are numerous features, the compositions—rich in harmonic depth and rhythmic vitality—and arrangements star here. Walser's brass often plays the themes and embellishes behind the ensemble. Madsen's writing largely conveys a sense of each particular sin: The upper-register strings in "Jealousy" brood, "Rage" has a heavy bass vamp, "Excessive Desire" is rhythmically compelling.

"Overindulgence" has an eerie keyboard intro that prefaces terrific string-and-rhythm writing and playing, but Madsen occasionally indulges in some gratuitous electronic flotsam, as on "Hubris." It's the rare questionable choice that mars an otherwise impressive statement.

—Kirk Silsbee

Gravity Of Love: Excessive Love; Jealousy; Hubris; Rage; Deficient Love; Indifference; Malicious Love; Over Indulgence; Excessive Desire; Avarice; Swiss Chocolate. (64:15)

Personnel: Peter Madsen, piano; Herbert Walser, trumpet, flugel horn, electronics; Dominik Neunteufel, bass; Alfred Vogel, drums, percussion; Aleksandra Lartseva, violin; Monica Tarcsay, violin; Simon Frick, viola, electronics; Bianca Riesner, cello.

Ordering info: playscape-recordings.com

