



Jean-Michel Pilc Trio

Welcome Home

Dreyfus 36630

★★★★½

Moutin Reunion Quartet

Power Tree

Dreyfus 36704

★★★★½

Imperatives of collective dialogue, virtuosic play and focused clarity abound on the 14 tracks of *Welcome Home*, the succinct and far-ranging third album by the Jean-Michel Pilc Trio. It follows a pair of intriguing 1999 recordings on Challenge (*Live At Sweet Basil, Vol. 1 and 2*) that documented a set of extended, spontaneously arranged explorations—free-associative, orchestral, marked by rigorous logic and a whimsical sense of musical narrative, replete with imaginative reharmonizations and sudden shifts in meter, tempo and attack—by pianist Pilc, bassist Francois Moutin and drummer Ari Hoinig, who play with the synchronous panache of virtuoso trapeze artists. All those qualities mark *Welcome Home*, a studio date on which the three studiously avoid clichés, turning each track into a universe of its own.

Pilc possesses a dazzling technique informed by a relentless sense of inquiry, conjuring romantic explosions and intimate whispers, dense percussive clusters and lightning Bud Powell runs. An up-to-the-minute postmodernist

who knows his Erroll Garner, too, Pilc's ends are more novelistic than pastiche; his concern is to apply musical ideas to tell a story, much as a rocket scientist—his field of study in a former life—deploys abstract theoretical principles of thermodynamics and physics to concrete uses. The effect is not unlike *Money Jungle*, the flawed, turbulent, endlessly creative 1962 triologue of Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus and Max Roach.

Much of the pleasure of *Welcome Home* derives from Pilc's interplay with Moutin, a compelling bassist who projects a dark, spot-on tone with an attack that can be fleet and horn-like, but also foundational and bottom-oriented. On *Power Tree*, he joins forces with his identical twin, drummer Louis, reedman Sylvain Beuf and pianist Baptiste Trotignon on a program of six originals, two by French singer Georges Brassens, and the old chestnut "La Vie En Rose."

It would be hard to find two musicians more in sync than the twins, who lay down one surging, complex, interlocked groove after another; Beuf, who gets a song-like effect on tenor and a clarinetish flavor on soprano, elegantly navi-

gates the melodies with savoir faire and good intonation; Trotignon provides apropos comp, harmonic imagination and straightforward solos. The musicianship is impeccable, and the group generates a lot of fire, but the music rarely transcends a by-the-numbers quality. The exception is the bassist, who is the type of player you pay attention to even when he's walking a bassline, and who constructs several declamations that you can return to for inspiration over and over again.

—Ted Panken

Welcome Home: So What; I Got It Bad And That Ain't Good; Stella By Starlight; Autumn In Newfane; Colchiques Dans Les Prés; Solitude; Cousin Mary; Giant Steps; Tenderly; Welcome Home; Serial Mother Blues; Scarborough Fair; Rhythm-A-Ning; Beginning. (65:12)

Personnel: Jean-Michel Pilc, piano; Francois Moutin, bass; Ari Hoinig, drums.

Power Tree: La Vie En Rose; Free Climbing; Africa; Flying Bridge; Toutes Directions; Je m'suis fait tout p'tit; Medley: Les Copains d'abord/Le Gorille; A batons rompus; Song For A Cat. (70:18)

Personnel: Francois Moutin, bass; Louis Moutin, drums; Baptiste Trotignon, piano; Sylvain Beuf, tenor and soprano saxophones.

Ordering Info: www.dreyfusrecords.com

DOWN BEAT.

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