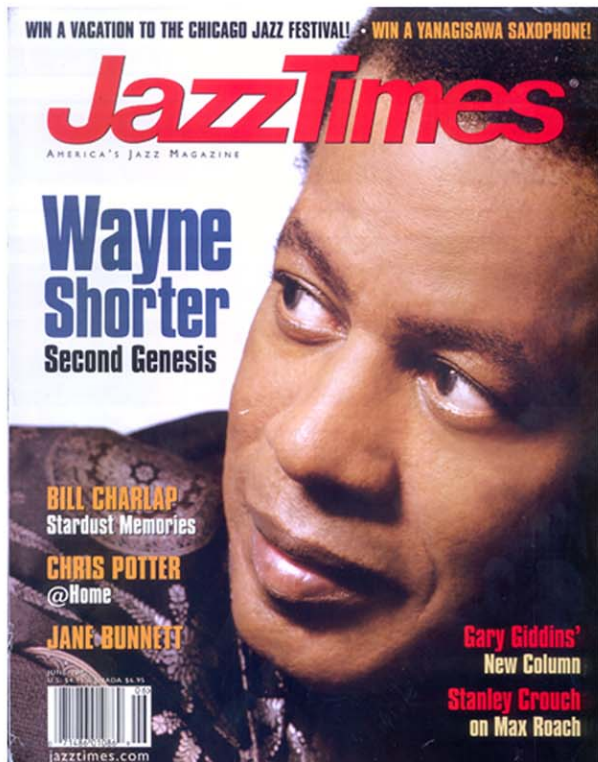


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JEAN-MICHEL PILC TRIO

Welcome Home

Dreyfus 36630 (65:12)

Pianist Jean-Michel Pilc has facility, imagination and, on the basis of *Welcome Home*, great style and keyboard technique. His approach ranges from masterful on Monk's "Rhythm-A-Ning" and his own "Autumn in Newfane" to enchanting on the Ellington anthems "I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good" and "Solitude." On "I Got It Bad," his use of stride elements and influences midway through prove a fine touch, while on "Solitude" he skillfully embellishes and extends the themes, giving the vintage tune a spirited edge and conclusion. Pilc's sometimes seems to attack the keys, his left hand hurtling across octaves while

the right hand is providing an equally strong, dynamic answering pulse. But he's also able to play with poignancy and passion in softer volumes, giving "Tenderly" a soothing, delightful treatment while still retaining substantial rhythmic tension and energy during his solos.

Pilc's partners are nearly as exciting, and do an outstanding job of sustaining the music's energy during Pilc's solos. Bassist François Moutin has an outstanding solo on "So What," delivering a tremendous pizzicato improvisation that unfortunately doesn't register as full or emphatic as it should because it fades in and out of the mix. Drummer Ari Hoenig capably switches roles from driving the band to melding within it and back again. He's a rhythmic catalyst on "Giant Steps," a supportive presence on "Stella by Starlight" and "Tenderly," then has to constantly adjust and react during Pilc's whirling montages on "Rhythm-A-Ning." Hoenig finally gets a moment in the spotlight on "Colchiques dans les Prés," decisively establishing the piece's tempo, then guiding Pilc and Moutin into mutually comfortable territory, buttressing their solos and finally restoring the tune's original pace.

The only negative area concerns the lack of original pieces. On "Serial Mother Blues" and "Autumn in Newfane" Pilc displays a musical boldness and verve that indicates he's also an expert composer. I hope that his next album will see him devote as much attention and effort to his own tunes as he does to those of Monk and Ellington on *Welcome Home*.

—Ron Wynn