



April 11, 2003

## JEAN-MICHEL PILC

**Friday 4/11, Green Mill;  
Saturday 4/12, Jazz Record Mart and Northwestern University**

The titles on *Welcome Home* (Dreyfus), the 2002 album from Paris-born pianist Jean-Michel Pilc, may be familiar--Coltrane's "Cousin Mary," Ellington's "I've Got It Bad," Monk's "Rhythm-a-Ning," Simon & Garfunkel's "Scarborough Fair"--but in many cases the arrangements are so drastic Pilc practically rewrites the songs. Sometimes he camouflages the tune to delay its recognition: in the first ten seconds of his introduction to "Giant Steps," he lays the slinky strains of "The Pink Panther Theme" atop the asymmetrical bass line from "Mission: Impossible," so that by the time he weaves in Coltrane's famously jumpy melody, it comes almost as a relief. Elsewhere, Pilc uses off-kilter harmonies to add mystery to well-known melodies. And on Miles Davis's easygoing altered blues "So What," he energizes the main theme by echoing it rapid-fire between the piano's lower octaves and the bass, foreshadowing the full-blown improv and largely obliterating the solo-accompaniment division that marks the original version (and most subsequent recordings) of the tune. Perhaps it's a French thing, this fascination with dramatic arranging; the best-known Parisian pianist in New York, Jacky Terrasson, has made such tactics an especially prominent part of his art too. In Pilc's case the rethinking is more than merely clever. His tinkering almost always serves as a road map to his adventurous solos, and it's the solos, even more than the arrangements, that refresh these chestnuts. Pilc's playing reveals a roaring fire that all but consumes the cosmopolitan sheen stereotypical of European music; **he's created an admirable triologue with his bandmates, bassist Francois Moutin and drummer Art Hoenig, that represents another stage in the evolution of the interplay brought to piano jazz by Bill Evans.** Friday, April 11, 9 PM, Green Mill, 4802 North Broadway; 773-878-5552. Saturday, April 12, 7:30 PM, Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, Northwestern University, 50 Arts Circle Dr., Evanston; 847-467-4000 or 847-491-5441. Pilc also plays a solo show Saturday, April 12, 2 PM, Jazz Record Mart, 444 North Wabash; 312-222-1467. --NEIL TESSER