

Jean Michel Pilc - "True Story"

(FDM)

French-born, NYC-based pianist/composer Jean-Michel Pilc is a serious deep thinker who has incredible technique and the creativity to merge classical, traditional and modern jazz and other elements into a highly-singular style. Veteran drummer Billy Hart and Mingus Big Band bassist Boris Kozlov join the eclectic pianist on a program of mostly originals. Franz Schubert, Cole Porter and Tom Jones are covered as well ("Relic," "My Heart Belongs to Daddy" and an almost unrecognizable "Try to Remember"). Pilc gets vicious on tracks like "PBH Factor" and "High Sky - The Elegant Universe," the Monk-ish "B.B.B." and sinister "True Story - Scene 1" while showing a tender side on pieces like "A Brief History of Time" and "Mornings with Franz." Initially, the recording seemed a bit too clinical for my taste, but I have warmed to it much more upon repeated listenings. At first it seemed more a solo piano outing, but Kozlov and Hart's input is tasteful and delicious when you focus on it. And Pilc's compositions reveal subtleties and glowing beauty as you peel the layers back. Pilc's creativity is at times almost unfathomable, and there are even surprises like "Kingston, NY," which swings in such a lovely manner that it makes you wish the pianist would do more in that vein. And the album reaches its heights when the band is going full-tilt (as on "Try to Remember"). Somewhat reminiscent of Bill Evans' work, but Pilc has his own original take on the piano that has given him a reputation as a brilliant innovator. Pilc is also the subject of a recent documentary - in which he expounds on his artistic theories - which we hope to review shortly.

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