

creating darting, harmonized bop lines. If that's not enough to convince you that these musicians are particularly well matched, listen to how they bring a fresh, singing quality to "My Romance," with a big assist from bassist David Finck. Or check out how Öberg elegantly introduces "Blue in Green" with ringing harmonics and blues tints before Petrescu soulfully embellishes the theme with help from Finck and drummer Mark McLean. Petrescu's virtuosity often brings to mind the closely linked legacies of Peterson and Art Tatum, and he caps the album with a wondrously animated solo performance of "Indiana" that surely would have delighted both keyboard giants. **MIKE JOYCE**

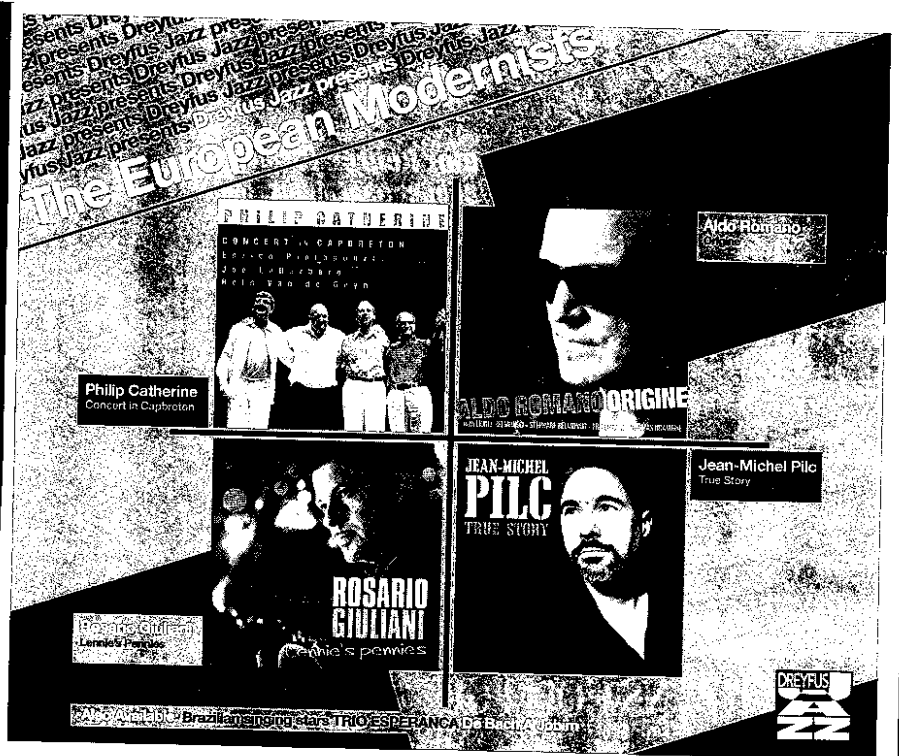
JEAN-MICHEL PILC

True Story (Dreyfus Jazz)



French pianist Jean-Michel Pilc blew onto the New York scene with gale force back in 1995, flaunting monstrous chops, uncanny

speed and a penchant for re-harmonization and rhythmic ingenuity that immediately marked him as an exciting new talent to watch. Over the course of the past 15 years, he churned out an impressive string of trio recordings with bassist Francois Moutin and drummer Ari Hoenig that cemented his reputation as a killer pianist and accom-



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plished composer. Pilc's latest outing finds him joining a new rhythm tandem of bassist Boris Kozlov and veteran drummer Billy Hart in a number of stirring originals, including the five-movement "True Story" suite, along with a few choice covers that showcase another more subtle and lyrical side of his formidable musicality.

The collection opens with the elegant "The Other Night," a delicate, relaxed number in which Hart plays with utmost sensitivity. Pilc's interpretation of Franz Schubert's "Relic" opens in a similarly sparse manner before the group dynamic explodes midway through and the players engage in a highly interactive dialogue fueled by Hart's keen listening and reacting on the kit. On the engaging "PBH Factor," Pilc injects some loose, gospelish feel into the conversational proceedings, recalling the loose-tight chemistry of Keith Jarrett's trio. "A Brief History of Time" is a darkly beautiful ballad underscored by Hart's alluring brushwork, while "High Sky - The Elegant Universe" is a quirky, playful offering comprising many moods—from turbulent to wistful—through which the group traverses with quicksilver instincts. The expansive, swinging vehicle "B.B.B." is perhaps the best example here of Pilc's pyrotechnic abilities on the keyboard.

Elsewhere, Pilc alternately embraces

minimalism ("Mornings With Franz") and melody ("Kingston, NY") while playfully reinventing familiar melodies ("Try to Remember," "My Heart Belongs to Daddy" done as a tango) with his remarkably agile band. And the dramatic "True Story" suite—five separate "Scenes" under three minutes each—ranges from contemplative to avant-garde, from naïve children's song to harsh dissonance. Simply put, this is Pilc's deepest and most rewarding statement to date. **BILL MILKOWSKI**