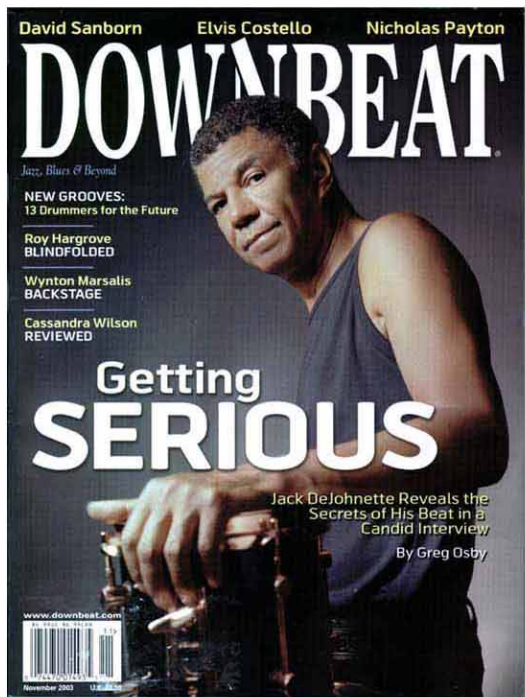



# DownBeat

## November 2003



The <b>HOT</b> BOX 					
CDs ▼	CRITICS ▶	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
Cassandra Wilson <i>Glamour</i>		★★★	★★★	★★½	★★★
James Blood Ulmer <i>No Escape From The Blues</i>		★★★½	★★½	★★★	★★★★
Jean-Michel Pilc <i>Cardinal Points</i>		★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★½
Avishai Cohen <i>Lyla</i>		★★½	★★	★★½	★★½

### Jean-Michel Pilc

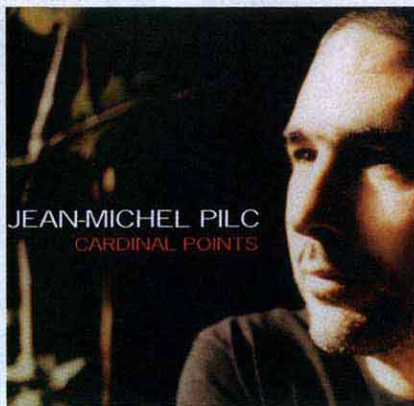
#### *Cardinal Points*

DREYFUS 36649

★★★★

For the last several years, Brooklyn-based pianist Jean-Michel Pilc has blown many a mind with his trio's architectural overhauls of jazz jewels like "Freddie Freeloader," "Cousin Mary" and "Rhythm-A-Ning." Pilc's a progressive with a tradster's heart—keen to break new ground, but smitten with the resonance that's often attached to a classic melody. The profound chemistry he's developed with bassist Francois Moutin and drummer Ari Hoenig give him a chance to enjoy the best of both worlds.

The impressive *Cardinal Points* finds the pianist in a place similar to the spot Jacky Terrasson stood a few years ago. With the trio's work well documented, Pilc is now taking a new ensemble to a different musical locale. Even in moments of deep deconstruction, melody was the most important aspect of the threesome's maneuvers. Here, dynamics are paramount. The personalities driving the new material—soprano saxophonist Sam Newsome, bassist James Genus and hand percussionist Abdou M'Boup join Hoenig—



put a lot of weight on their collective thrust. The result is music thick with activity, ridiculously well-balanced, and trading in the kind of grace that still has the power to shake a room. Keith Jarrett found something similar to it during the first years of his stint at Impulse!; Pilc's nudging it a bit further down the line.

Some might hear Jarrett in the opening lilt of "Fred's Walk." Pilc's unafraid of allusion, probably because he's so much his own man stylistically. As he blocks out the theme, the band comes at him in three different ways, foreshadowing part of the disc's agenda: polyrhythmic playfulness. Revealing the

logic behind competitive meters and tempos, the ensemble spends most of the program demonstrating how imaginative its rhythmic coordination really is.

Juxtaposition is central to the music's breadth. "South" moves from rapture to ruckus, but it's hard to spot the transition points; the music simply evolves. "West" has a similar moment, as a bouncy pulse morphs into a light swing. And "East" finds Genus and Hoenig allowing its ghostly melody to simultaneously drift and drive.

Precision marks the pianist's work as well. After making a seemingly impromptu trickle of notes act as a well-planned thematic statement at the start of "Ari's Mode," the group creates a hubbub of sound built on an array of focused particulars. Ditto for the four-part "Trio Sonata" played by the reunited trio.

Stressing economy even in the most florid moments, Pilc reminds that eloquently expressing emotions is all about calibration and command.

—Jim Macnie

**Cardinal Points:** Fred's Walk; South; West; North; East; Ari's Mode; Mood Indigo; Trio Sonata. (63:45)

**Personnel:** Jean-Michel Pilc, piano; Sam Newsome, soprano saxophone; James Genus, bass; Ari Hoenig, drums; Francois Moutin, bass (8,9,10,11); Abdou M'Boup, percussion.

Ordering Info: [www.dreyfusrecords.com](http://www.dreyfusrecords.com)