

# JazzTimes

November 2004



## JEAN-MICHEL PILC

### *Follow Me*

Dreyfus

Jean-Michel Pilc is a trip. No jazz pianist today offers anything like his mélange of monster chops, wildly impulsive imagination, addiction to bombastic melodrama and shameless love of showing off. Pilc is best known for his work with a trio featuring bassist François Moutin and drummer Ari Hoenig, as heard on 2002's *Welcome Home* (Dreyfus). This band has been mentioned alongside Brad Mehldau, Jason Moran and the Bad Plus as artists who are rejuvenating the piano trio.

*Follow Me* is Pilc's first solo recording, and freed from the minimal constraints imposed by his trio colleagues, he opens the floodgates. The pieces that best demonstrate the originality of his mind, and the technique to make that originality articulate, are those surrounded by long-established jazz precedent and tradition: "My Favorite Things" and "Autumn Leaves." Pilc's daring reharmonizations and hard right turns in dynamics and rhythm dismantle each song in order to rethink and rebuild it. The mood swings within "My Favorite Things," from violent left-hand crashes to the most delicate right-hand touches on the melody, are schizophrenic, but they are also a rush. In the space of 90 seconds, Pilc both beats the daylights out of "Oleo" and fondly caresses it.

Pilc has made a statement about his creative process that is revealing: "When I'm sitting at the piano and I start playing, I try to be like a five-year-old child discovering a toy and learning to have fun with it." Pilc's music sounds exactly like that. In its hyperactive spontaneity, indulgence and self-consciousness it sounds like the output of an extravagantly gifted and rather naughty child. Therein lies its appeal, and also its burden. **THOMAS CONRAD**