

# Chicago Tribune

## MUSIC REVIEW (EXCERPT)

**By Howard Reich**

Tribune arts critic

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The French pianist Jean-Michel Pilc ranks among today's titans of the instrument, his digital virtuosity matched by the sheer size of his sound, the power of his attacks and the sophistication of his conception as bandleader. But on his all-solo "Follow Me," he produces some of the more human-scaled pianism in his discography. Pilc's nostalgic tone in the jazz waltz "Les Amants d'un Jour," his wry account of W.C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues" and his utterly unexpected -- and thoroughly delightful -- whistling on "One for My Baby" and "Les Copains d'Abord" attest to the intimacy of this recording. Yet "Follow Me" also transcends these moments with some genuinely Herculean playing, as in Pilc's audacious, propulsive solo on Sonny Rollins' signature "Oleo" and his practically orchestral musings on "My Favorite Things" (with implicit suggestions of John Coltrane's famous recordings of the tune). Further enriched by Pilc's Chopinesque "Happiness Seven" and his Debussy-inspired "Beaver Dam," "Follow Me" stands a major summation of Pilc's keyboard art, which has no counterparts.

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