



Mixed Feelings
Abelita Mateus (s/r)
by Elliott Simon

Amid the images of idyllic tropical isles and hot NYC nights are corresponding bluesy strains that infiltrate *Mixed Feelings*. This sophomore release from Brazilian pianist/vocalist Abelita Mateus derives its spirit from changing rhythms, melodic fluctuations and the pianist's separate interchanges with guitarist Romero Lubambo and tenor saxophonist Matt Marantz. Bulgarian bassist Peter Slavov and Brazilian drummer Alex Kautz are a well-connected rhythm section Mateus uses to her advantage in navigating the varied landscape, with percussionist Phillip Gillette elegantly coloring two Brazilian classics.

The title cut uses Mateus' quickness to generate an upbeat surface but Marantz' blue and intermittently dissonant saxophone adds longing to an otherwise straightforward melody. Lubambo, the only holdover from Mateus' heartfelt paean to the music of her homeland (*Vivenda*, 2017), knows the leader well and is the perfect match for her clean, crisp technique. He is again in sync with the session's overall ethos and the interplay between his sprightly guitar and Mateus' right hand creates the sought-after tension on the outwardly cheerful "Vamo N'Êça".

Mateus is a first-rate vocalist and it is a shame she only sings on two offerings. She is gorgeously seductive on Djavan's "A Ilha" and her elegant interpretation of Jobim's "Bonita" once more showcases her special bond with Lubambo. Each of her syllables yearns for an embrace and the mood is further heightened by contemplative Rhodes and Marantz' earthy tenor. Slavov and Kautz give "Paizinho" a solid foundation, which allows both Mateus and Marantz to show off their chops, while "Patience" never quite lives up to its initial promise but perhaps that is the point. Spacious closer "Ligia", also from Jobim, is presented in a delicate piano trio format, which would have benefited from Mateus' vocal. The entire session is a strong second effort, successfully conveying the conflicting emotions of musicians choosing to live in the diaspora through Mateus' own private NYC/Brazil dialectic.

For more information, visit abelita.com.br. This project is at Dizzy's Club Oct. 2nd. See Calendar.



Science Fair
Allison Miller/Carmen Staaf (Sunnyside)
by Jim Motavalli

Remember those records where someone like Coleman Hawkins "met" Sonny Rollins? Sparks were sure to fly. Drummer Allison Miller and pianist Carmen Staaf aren't as far apart as that pairing, but bring their A-game to explore the potential of their partnership fully. The album, all originals, features the pair in duos and in various combinations with Ambrose Akinmusire (trumpet) and Dayna Stephens (tenor saxophone). Bassist Matt Penman comes and goes and is a big help.

This music is on the exploratory edge of inside, spiky, challenging, varied, deeply soulful and fully human. Miller's "What?!" opens with a blast from all the musicians, but then—showing how this music constantly changes—quiets down, Miller laying down an almost martial but restrained backbeat that leads into a contemplative, yearning theme. Both horns solo and Staaf and Miller are right there with empathic support. The piano shimmers, the rhythm section kicks in, the theme returns, and then the musicians improvise over the outro. What more could you want?

Staaf's "Symmetry" rides in on rumbling waves from piano, then slows to a crawl so Stephens can enter on breathy yet menacing tenor. Miller's "Ready Steady" features deep bass, with Staaf playing pretty, like a rootsier Bill Evans. On Staaf's "MLW", a duo number, an angular take on "Caravan" is suggested, with Miller's unusual folk drumming a delight.

For confirmation of Akinmusire's importance to the future of the trumpet, look no further than "Weightless" where, following a midtempo late '60s romp from Stephens, he enters tentatively on a wisp of piano. The solo nods to Lester Bowie, but with close attention to the tune's structure and a great use of space. Penman is great on this one. Watch out for Stephens too. On Staaf's "Nobody's Human" he's all over the horn with his big fat ennobled tone. But instead of playing it safe he skirts the lower register, creating cries and whispers for added tension.

Miller and Staaf are strong writers—and even stronger players—with a unified purpose on this bracing album.

For more information, visit sunnysiderecords.com. This project is at Jazz Standard Oct. 3rd. See Calendar.

UNEARTHED GEM



M Monk
Thelonious Monk (Gearbox)
by Anders Griffen

Just months after long lost tapes of the great John Coltrane Quartet were discovered, a similar find was made of the Thelonious Monk Quartet and both happen to be from within a day of each other in 1963. Monk's great quartet with tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist John Ore and drummer Frankie Dunlop started to become established during a European tour in the spring of 1961, parts of which are heard on records for Riverside, Milestone and various European labels. The quartet embarked on a fruitful run with Columbia Records when they started recording what would become *Monk's Dream* on Halloween of 1962, released in 1963. The newly discovered set was recorded live during this fruitful period on Mar. 5th, 1963 in the concert hall at Odd Fellows Mansion in Copenhagen and shares three pieces with *Monk's Dream*: "Body and Soul", "Bye-Ya" and "Monk's Dream" (the two originals dating back to at least 1952). Near the height of their powers, this ensemble has great rapport while reaching for their zenith.

Monk's quartet with Rouse, Ore and Dunlop was indeed great, but fairly short-lived, which makes these lost tapes that much more valuable. By 1964 Ore and Dunlop would be replaced by Larry Gales and Ben Riley, respectively, who would finish out the decade as Monk's rhythm section. Rouse was the mainstay who would become an integral part of Monk's group sound. Monk and Rouse met as early as 1944, but they didn't start working together regularly until 1959. By 1963 Rouse was really getting inside Monk's music. "Rouse has for some years been Monk's third arm," critic Jef Langford wrote in 1970. "It is doubtful whether any other saxophonist could have integrated himself so completely in the way Rouse has done." In his solos on this set, he returns to certain motifs between brief explorations, occasionally squeaking along the way. In his third chorus on "Nuttty", or around the 2:54 mark, he seems to play a 'wrong' note, but brilliantly plays it again resolving it properly just four seconds later before entering the bridge. The set opens with Dunlop's spacious solo when the melody for "Bye-Ya" sneaks in. "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" begins with a solo stride piano introduction before the group jumps in and tears up a medium-bright swing. "Body and Soul" is a beautiful piano solo; Monk changes his approach to harmony throughout, telling a story, mixing deep content with great whimsy. The group kicks back in on "Monk's Dream", swinging hard.

The sound quality is impressive, especially for lost tapes apparently found in a dumpster. There's good clarity and balance between the instruments; Ore doesn't get lost in the mix (as the bass sometimes does on older live recordings). A historic discovery, this is signature Monk and a great record that deserves to be considered along with the Columbia sides and all of your favorite Riverside records.

For more information, visit gearboxrecords.com

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