

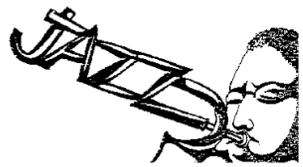


Boundary

Megumi Yonezawa/Masa Kamaguchi/Ken Kobayashi
(ESP-Disk')
by Tyran Grillo

After scrimshawing a name for herself in the ivory of jazz as sidewoman for saxophonist Greg Osby and following her 2016 leader debut *A Result of the Colors*, pianist Megumi Yonezawa releases her deepest personal statement to date. *Boundary* triangulates her tactful artistry with bassist Masa Kamaguchi and drummer Ken Kobayashi in a set of nine freely improvised tunes, plus a lone standard for good measure. If said standard—Sammy Fain-Irving Kahal's "I'll Be Seeing You"—feels like a message that has traveled light-years to get here and shows the trio at its most resonant, then the spontaneous wonders cushioning it feel like messages yet to be revealed and show the trio at its most inward. As in the droplets of piano that open the title track, each turn of phrase makes known a realm that only the ears can grasp.

While other titles offer descriptors of what one encounters here, their truth is limited. "Alchemy", for example, does indeed come across as a sonic conversion of base elements, even as one is constantly reminded of something far more precious than gold: namely, the coherence of flesh, bone and dedication that only



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musicians who listen to each other this closely can achieve. "Tremor", too, despite an underlying quiver of spontaneity, names the album's steadiest departure. Then there's "Wavelength", a duet between Kamaguchi and Kobayashi implying something greater than synergy: dialogue.

Even without such trail markers, one can hear the cartographic sincerity of "Reef" and tactile intensity of "Nostalgio" as if they were one and the same. The most absorbing promises are fulfilled in "Veil" and "Onement". Where the former is as beautiful as it is intrepid, the latter swirls with life-giving immediacy. Mirroring the patient unfolding of "Meryon", they seek catharsis on the path to getting there, so that by the end a new beginning has already opened its eyes for want of another day.

For more information, visit espdisk.com. This project is at Greenwich House Music School Feb. 9th. See Calendar.



**Forever Sanctified
Joey Morant (Blujazz)
by Anna Steegmann**

If you have experienced Joey Morant's dazzling trumpet and flugelhorn playing, scat singing and humorous banter on stage, you have witnessed an entertainer par excellence. This Charleston native is a musician from the Jenkins Orphanage Band tradition of the '50s. His admiration for Louis Armstrong is unmistakable and he has made a name for himself with his soulful Armstrong interpretations. He has won prestigious awards, performed internationally and played/recorded with Ray Charles, James Brown, Dizzy Gillespie, Benny Goodman and many others. Nonetheless, he has been called "one of the heaviest cats you never heard of." This should change with *Forever Sanctified*, his second CD after *Better Late Than Never* from 1998.

Forever Sanctified has 12 tracks, half Morant's tunes. The musicians play in duo, trio, quartet or sextet formation: Mike LeDonne or the late Gene Ludwig (organ), Mark Whitfield (guitar), Max Schweiger (baritone saxophone), John Simon (tenor saxophone), Cameron Brown (bass) and Tedd Firth or Terence Conley (piano) are excellent collaborators. Morant's 17-year-old son Amadeus plays drums throughout.

This is soul jazz at its best, lyrical, sincere and heartfelt. All the musicians are on top of their game but it's Morant's showcase for his wide range of talents. His dynamic and creative play stands out in the instrumental tracks. Jimmy McHugh-Dorothy Fields' "Don't Blame Me", a duo with Conley and Morant on flugelhorn, is riveting. Traditional song "Annie Laurie" shows the leader's superior command of both horns. Abel Baer-L. Wolfe Gilbert's "My Mother's Eyes" starts mournful and ends in a joyful upbeat improvisation, Morant pulling off astonishing lower registers on trumpet. "Sidewinder"'s spirited horn solos fête Lee Morgan.

In his own compositions, he presents poetry in song on "It's Expensive To Be Poor", lets his horns go into high-speed fire mode in "Wacky, Lacky, Clacky", takes wild flights in "Joey's Theme" and plays melodic postbop in "437 Race Street". Other tracks break no new ground but confirm his claim that he can "play and entertain in any genre and still be a jazz musician."

For more information, visit blujazz.com. Morant is at Blue Note Feb. 10th and Club Macanudo Feb. 20th. See Calendar.



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