

Tim Garland

Libra

GLOBAL MIX GM2CD03

The Eyes Of Ages; Hang Loose; Arabesque For Three; Frontier (SunGod; MoonGod; On SunGod; Libra); Old Man Winter; Blue In Green; Bajo Del Sol; Darkhouse; Sly Eyes; Black Elk; Break In The Weather; Nostalgia In Times Square.

The Lighthouse Trio: Garland (s, bcl); Gwilym Simcock (p); Asaf Sirkis (pc). With guest Paul Bollenback (g) and The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. 08.

A confection of jazz and classical music, that's occasionally hard for a jazz writer to properly assess - eleven tunes by a trio and a work for symphony orchestra and trio ("Frontier"). Bollenback is a guest on three trio tunes. There are two CDs - one subtitled *Sun* and the other *Moon*. *Sun* can be warm and cool and is envisioned as a star in a huge galaxy on the cover. Garland's sweet-spicy sound and soloing is contrasted by a cool formality around the trio. They can play what appears to be long through-written sections and they can blow furiously. But even in the strongest playing there's still a sense of neat control, as though the musicians have a clear understanding of where they are in the composition, and are aware of the balance Garland has set for the entire piece. In a few tunes, there's an absence of what many would regard as jazz, but even when he's playing straight, Garland is warm and personal.

"Frontier" starts with an orchestral piece, which takes elements of jazz big band writing into the full orchestra context and juxtaposes them with pastoral and atonal styles and many devices absorbed from what seems to me to be the English tradition - Vaughan Williams to Britten to Birtwhistle. It sounds a blast for the brass and percussion sections. The trio comes in later, and there's a sagging in the tension with some Jarrett/orchestra references. When the trio takes the lead in "On SunGod" the temperature rises. "Frontier" is followed by the trio plus Bollenback on "Old Man Winter", and the jazz listener gets to hear some passionate blowing by the saxophonist. I don't find Simcock or Sirkis hugely engaging soloists, but they're clearly very capable at crossing the boundaries into articulating Garland's writing with great élan and empathy with their leader. Simcock is notably comfortable on a tricky, densely noted passage of twentieth century classical origin.

Moon kicks off with a different vibe - a cheering audience and a live sound which has a lot of resonance. The mood is relaxed, the tunes are more open-ended and there's bright positivity and use of folk-dances and uplifting anthems that exude good cheer. "Nostalgia In Times Square" tests Sirkis's swing. He's far too four-square for me. In the midst of *Moon*, there's a Garland plus strings composition, "Darkhouse". Garland's lucid and translucent clarinet is set against a harmonic swell of buoyancy and warmth that cools at the finale into a question and open-ended mystery. The writing for strings is well balanced and lets Garland sound at ease, as though he's improvising, although I'm sure he's not. For me, it's the best distillation of the two genres on the album and makes Kenny Wheeler's composition which follows sound a little trite. It reminds of the benefits of the added tension and structure in the first CD.

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