



Kenny Werner
Me, Myself & I

JUSTIN TIME 248

★★★★★

Kenny Werner
Institute Of Higher Learning

HALF NOTE 4548

★★★★½

Distant voices run throughout the oftentimes lush, sometimes bombastic, most often thoroughly musical set of seven compositions from Kenny Werner's *Institute Of Higher Learning*. The opening to the three-movement "Cantabile" features his swinging, lyrical and reflective, aided with an equally lyrical turn from trumpeter Pierre Drevet. Then there's the surprise insertion of Peter Hertmans' caustic yet also melodic electric guitar. Werner's piano returns for another uptempo swinger with trumpeter Nico Schepers close behind. It is here that Werner's pen begins to create some memorable musical moments, the third movement tying "Cantabile" together with a strong melody, beautiful harmonic contrasts and robust arrangement.

Here and there Werner's arrangements evoke influences, especially trombonist Bob Brookmeyer and Gil Evans. Another name who might have been in the back of Werner's mind is trumpeter Kenny Wheeler and his large-ensemble work from the early 1980s. This is true particularly when the mood is more subdued, as with the second movement of the "Cantabile" and "Second Love Song." Except for the novel addition of the traditional "The House Of The Rising Sun," everything here is by Werner. "Compensation" was a kind of commission, an early song whose existence is owed to the urging of then-boss Mel Lewis. Here, the counterpoint that Werner speaks of in the liners with Maria Schneider manifests as the development of that initial chaos into order, the woodwind and brass passages precise and freewheeling.

Me, Myself & I, on the other hand, offers a window into the more reflective sides of the artist. He is right at home playing all covers

along with his solemn "Balloons," a simple tune built around two chords that evokes a sentimentality and a transparency both telling and convincing. Unpretentious, the playing tends to veer toward melody and arrangement, soft-spoken as opposed to virtuosic. Perhaps a spot where the volume might be adjusted comes with Werner's thinking-out-loud maneuverings through the changes on "All The Things You Are" and, especially, "Giant Steps." While the closer, "A Child Is Born," wears out its welcome at almost 12 minutes, it does hearken back to other chestnuts that are given similarly

in-depth treatments that pleasantly obscure the fundamentals of each song. —*John Ephland*

Me, Myself & I: Round Midnight; Balloons; All The Things; Blue In Green; I Had A King; Giant Steps; A Child Is Born. (66:15)
Personnel: Kenny Werner, piano.
Ordering info: justin-time.com

Institute Of Higher Learning: Cantabile (three movements); Second Love Song; The House Of The Rising Sun; Compensation; Institute Of Higher Learning. (69:31)

Personnel: Frank Vaganee, lead alto and soprano saxophones, flute; Dieter Limbourg, alto and soprano saxophones, clarinet, flute; Kurt Van Herck, tenor saxophone, flute; Bart Defoort, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Bo Van der Werf, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Serge Plume, lead trumpet, flugelhorn; Nico Schepers, Pierre Drevet, Jeroen Van Malderen, trumpet, flugelhorn; Marc Godfried, lead trombone; Lode Mertens, Ben Fleerackers, Laurent Hendrick, trombone; Peter Hertmans, guitar; Jos Machtel, bass; Martijn Vink, drums.

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