



Proximity
 Enrico Pieranunzi (CAM Jazz)
60 Out of Shape
 Jesper Lundgaard Trio (Storyville)
The Music of Enrico Pieranunzi
 Brussels Jazz Orchestra/Bert Joris/Enrico Pieranunzi
 (W.E.R.F.)
 by Ken Dryden

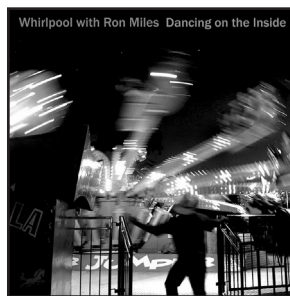
Italian pianist Enrico Pieranunzi has spent much of his career leading trios with a bassist and drummer. *Proximity* is a dramatic shift in a new direction, pairing the contrasting voices of trumpeter Ralph Alessi and saxophonist Donny McCaslin with bassist Matt Penman and no drummer. The resulting quartet's chemistry is quickly apparent as they interpret the pianist's diverse compositions. "Line For Lee" is an intricate bop line reminiscent of Lee Konitz' masterful reworking of chord changes into new songs, as the composer and Penman provide stimulating support for whimsical tenor and sassy cornet. The wistful ballad "Sundays" features McCaslin on soprano and Alessi on flugelhorn, alternating in a conversation growing more emotional with each chorus. "Simul" is an angular waltz where Pieranunzi adds a Monk-like descending line, evolving into a whirlwind duet by the pianist and trumpeter. A portion of the title track detours into freeish territory, utilizing a brief theme as a launching pad, then seeing where the group's improvisations takes it. Hopefully, this quartet will reassemble for future recordings. Only the CD's

47-minute length is disappointing, leaving the listener wanting more.

Pieranunzi is found in a supporting role for the live CD *60 Out of Shape*, recorded on Danish bassist Jesper Lundgaard's 60th birthday at Jazzhus Montmartre in Copenhagen. Pieranunzi is, of course, prominent, as is veteran Danish drummer Alex Riel, who began appearing at the original club back in its early days. The venue's intimacy, with its maximum seating of 75 attentive audience members, inspired these explorations of familiar standards and jazz gems. One of the joys of hearing top-caliber musicians is their ability to find fresh, often surprising approaches to such well-known songs. "Autumn Leaves" is a bit tentative and mysterious at first, with Pieranunzi's glistening introduction leading into a powerful bop setting negotiating the periphery of the theme. The band doesn't settle for Dizzy Gillespie's famous B-flat introduction to "All The Things You Are", opting instead for a constantly shifting aural kaleidoscope, with Lundgaard's masterful solo as its centerpiece. Pieranunzi uses waves of sound and a samba undercurrent to change the texture of "My Funny Valentine", waiting until well into the performance to reveal its melody. Only "Oleo" follows anything close to a traditional arrangement, though Pieranunzi's explosive attack, along with aggressive arco bass, helps unveil new sinews in this old warhorse.

Pieranunzi is also a prolific composer, though his music has been infrequently performed by large ensembles. Frank Vaganée, Director of the Brussels Jazz Orchestra, corrected this oversight by recruiting the pianist and trumpeter Bert Joris as guests for two concerts, both of which were recorded. With Joris contributing the arrangements and trumpet solos, Pieranunzi's music benefits from the larger canvas and its many colors. While the focus is often on the pianist, Joris and the rhythm section of bassist Jos Machtel and drummer Toni Vitacolonna, the orchestra is a major force when present, with a few excellent (though unidentified) soloists. Joris' creative use of reeds and brass in the elegant "Fellini's Waltz" gives the soloists strong support. The darting horns and reeds in "Newsbreak" bring to mind the hectic nature of the old newsrooms shown in films while Pieranunzi's intense improvisation fast-forwards the piece to the modern world. The gorgeous ballad "Distance From Departure" provides Pieranunzi with an opportunity to show off his considerable chops, with orchestra providing a pulsating backdrop for Joris' equally striking solo.

For more information, visit camjazz.com, storyvillerecords.com and dewerf.be. Pieranunzi is at Village Vanguard Jan. 12th-17th. See Calendar.



Dancing on the Inside
 Whirlpool (with Ron Miles) (ears&eyes)
 by Ken Micallef

Who says New York City is the center of the jazz universe? Denver (by way of Indianapolis) native and cornet player Ron Miles has been a significant jazz inspiration to many for years, endowing such now-popular players as drummers Rudy Royston and fellow cornet player Kirk Knuffke with guidance, motivation and a swift kick in their *modus operandi*.

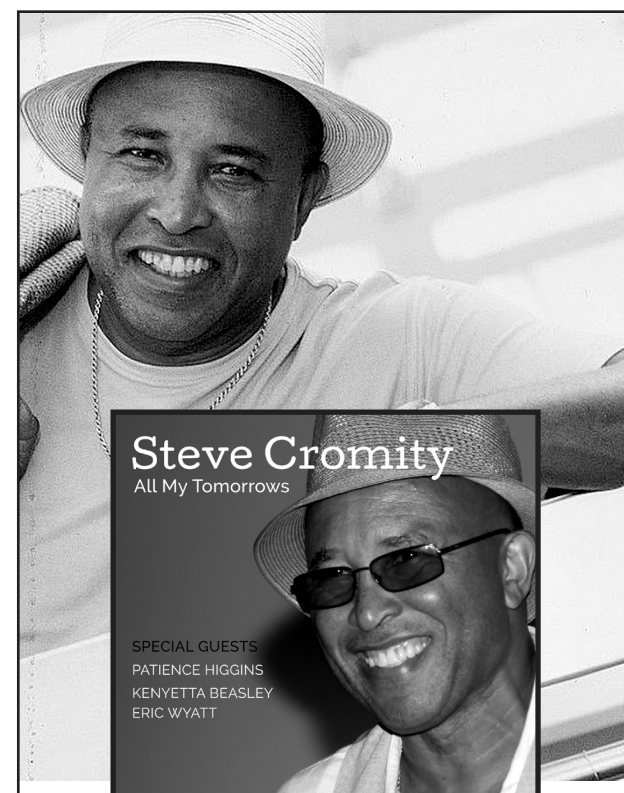
His many records include 1999's *Ron Miles Trio*, 2013's *Circuit Rider* and the current *Dancing on the Inside* by the band Whirlpool, as hip as any Williamsburg

group of hirsute musicians and vastly more entertaining.

Whirlpool is a surprisingly mature collective, each member but guest Miles contributing material. In that way Miles goes beyond mentor to benefactor, the assembled musicians—alto saxophonist/vocalist Caroline Davis, guitarist Jeff Swanson and drummer Charles Rumback—performing with subtlety and power in a handful of evocative compositions. Well-oiled and simpatico, this quartet travels a unique musical path. With many of their compositions of the through-composed variety, Whirlpool is thoughtful in execution and measured in delivery. Miles' pungent tone and swift delivery glue the performances together, his mature talent at both allowing the band great freedom while invisibly nudging them forward part of his silent yet provocative skill-set.

The slow-mo wailing tones and melody of "All Of Your Secrets" has something of a Klezmer feeling to its compact structure. Conversely, "The Crew" swings like an outtake from one of Shelly Manne's *At the Blackhawk* dates, Rumback kicking it off with explosive brush swipes and assaults, followed by the frontline's hardbop unison delivery, which changes mood when joined by Swanson's flowing chordal work. A beatnik-worthy blowout. Rumback's ride-cymbal pulse is especially delicious here, a shimmering saucer full of swing. Then Whirlpool tilts the boat, with Davis lending her soulful, pretty vocals to the dissonant dancing samba "Right Where". Album closer "Ridges" dances too soon, Whirlpool rumbling in an Ennio Morricone-tinged rubato intro, then gliding through a hovering, heaving pulse as arid as the big Denver sky.

For more information, visit earsandeyesrecords.com. Miles is at Jazz Standard Jan. 12th-17th. See Calendar.



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