



One After Another
Mamiko Watanabe (s/r)
by Terrell Holmes

With the release of *One After Another*, add Mamiko Watanabe to the list of talented jazz pianists that have come out of Japan in recent years. Watanabe composed all of the songs on this impressive debut and they show a strong, fully developed hardbop sensibility. Watanabe's composing MO is to start off a song with a strong theme or head, as a sort of attention-grabbing mechanism, then to pull it back to where it becomes an exploratory vehicle for the soloists ("The Deep Sea" exemplifies this as much as any song on the disc). The tunes are challenging and well-crafted and while Watanabe is a fine pianist, her composing is actually her most compelling aspect.

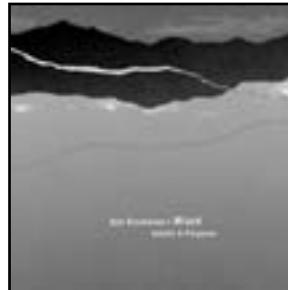
The Latin-flavored "Shadow" begins with an impressive fusillade of percussion by Francisco Mela, who plays over a repeated figure and features highlights and spices from saxist Walter Smith. "Savanna" opens in a space where McCoy Tyner seemed apt to go, Smith playing deftly across the melody and clever hardbop arrangement. The band performs well on the Monk-inspired "Take It Easy", which has melodic and thematic whiffs of Monk, but not, ironically enough, in Watanabe's playing.

"Say Something" is another hardbop foray, simple in construction yet eloquent. "Labryinth", too, has an off-center construction, with the chord progressions leading to unexpected corners. "Jour de Pluie a Paris" is an ambitious, exploratory waltz ballad on which Massimo Biolcati contributes some especially nice pizzicato and Watanabe explores every possibility the tune has to offer.

For more information, visit www.mamikowatanabe.com. Watanabe is at Cleopatra's Needle May 3rd. See calendar.



Group
EKG & Giuseppe Ielasi
(Formed)



Intents & Purposes
Kyle Bruckmann's Wrack
(482 Music)

by Kurt Gottschalk

Horns live a weird life in the electroacoustic sound world of Ernst Karel and Kyle Bruckmann. As a duo, EKG (the Ernst and Kyle Group) includes trumpet, oboe and English horn and with the addition of Giuseppe Ielasi they have guitar and piano as well. But all three also play electronics and the gentle chirps and whirrs and pops of their analog devices dominate most of their trio CD *Group*.

As a duo, EKG have been playing together since the late '90s and while Bruckmann also leads the

jazz-leaning quintet Wrack and Karel has played with Balkan and klezmer brass groups, their duo is sonically sparse, with a nervous sort of ambience. When the horns come in, they're often in paired, sustained harmonies, as if mimicking the low-end frequencies of amplified circuitry. It's a small, private and melancholy world they create that spins into vertigo with the occasional appearance of a somber piano line or ringing guitar strings. The more musical moments are reminiscent of Gastr del Sol or some of Cor Fuhler's solo work. But those moments are few and far between and the rest of the five long tracks here are more akin to the singing of machines. It can be quite beautiful, in the AMM-derived way that has become so fashionable, but only if approached with more patience than expectations.

Bruckmann turns the formula upside down with Wrack. On their second release, the instrumentation leans toward the traditional horns and rhythm section, but with a bit of a chamber ensemble feel. While Bruckmann lives in San Francisco, Wrack is very much a Chicago band, with Vandermark 5 drummer Tim Daisy, bassist Anton Hatwich, Jen Clare Paulson on viola and Jason Stein on bass clarinet. They largely follow a theme/solo approach, but Bruckmann's compositions are rich enough to make *Intents & Purposes* not sound like a soloist record. Some of the seven pieces here are cinematically evocative, but at other times - with prolonged poundings and pausings - they can show a surprising boldness. Whatever the intents, it shows Bruckmann to be an interestingly diverse bandleader who's well worth watching.

For more information, visit www.formedrecords.com and www.482music.com. EKG is at The Stone May 11th. Bruckmann is at Roulette May 6th with Bill Horvitz. See calendar.

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