

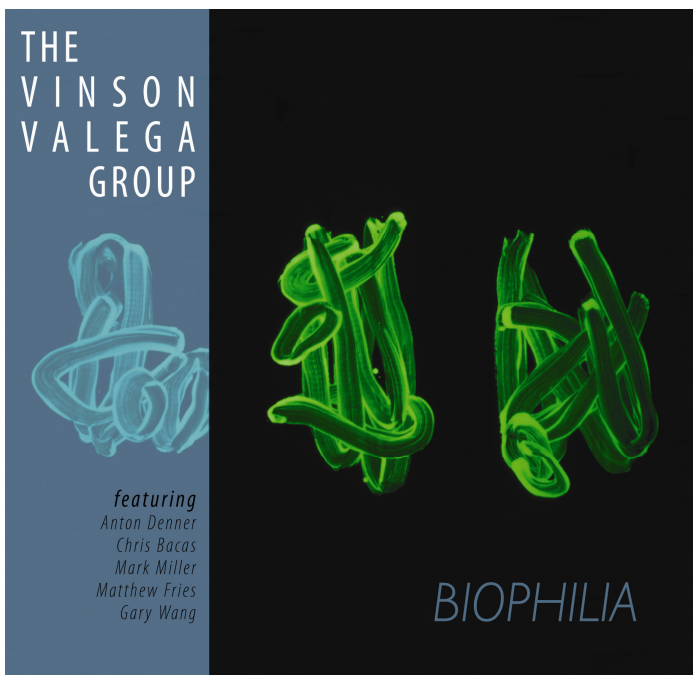
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**Vinson Valega Group *Biophilia***By [Bill Milkowski](#)

Drummer-composer Vinson Valega leads a crack sextet through several provocative originals along with faithful renditions of Ellington's elegant and rarely performed "Sunset and the Mockingbird" (from "Queen's Suite"), Thelonious Monk's "Think of One" and Ornette Coleman's rubato ballad "Kathelin Gray."

The drummer takes a coloristic approach on his gentle "I Just Wanted to See What You Look Like," and plays melodically on the kit in interpreting Irving Berlin's "Always." Tenor saxophonist Chris Bacas contributes the angular "Talk Time," which travels from funk to son montuno to free jazz.

Valega's lovely closer, "Doesn't It Feel Great to Be Alive?," is a vehicle for expressive solos by trombonist Mark Miller, flutist Anton Denner and Bacas on soprano sax. Valega's tour de force, "A Moment of Silence," is a challenging, shape-shifting number that puts the entire ensemble through its paces.



*featuring*  
Anton Denner  
Chris Bacas  
Mark Miller  
Matthew Fries  
Gary Wang