

NEW ISSUES

GRAND PRIX D'OUVERTURE
/ MUSIC FROM THE DESERT:
DESERT FLOWER / SANDSTORM
/ NO HOPE / NIGHT STARS /
LONGVIEW / SANDDUNES / THE
DESERT - LOST AND UNMOVED
/ DET SKER I VIRKELIGHEDEN
(THIS ACTUALLY HAPPENS).

39:04.

Davidson, p; Peter Fuglsang, cl, as,
duduk; Iain Ballamy, ts; Helianne
Blats, vln; John Ehde, cel; Nils
Davidson, b; Peter Danemo, d.
Feb 10 & 11, 2009,
Copenhagen, Denmark.



Joe Colombo by John Herr

Ellington's ability to bring a clutch of horns together in such a way that their overtones resonate, giving the illusion of more voices. This holds true of the swinging numbers as well. More particularly, the saxophonists display a real sense of ensemble camaraderie, and Valega (I've got to assume he's responsible for the writing) makes the most of it when he gives them chances to exchange phrases as they do on "A Moment of Silence." Fries' piano is also integrated into the ensembles to add depth. Valega also pays attention to the structure of the CD as a whole, mixing Hard Bop originals with biting edges with more elegiac material and inserting at regular intervals brief, marimba-colored interludes. So everything flows smoothly, even though the instrumentation shifts from track to track. Adding to the sense of unity and ensemble is the leader's own sensitive drumming. I say sensitive though the drums are mixed a bit higher here, louder in comparison to other recordings but more accurate to live sound. Valega provides the rhythmic impetus for the music but also adds colors that have harmonic resonance and accents that extend the melodies. Some of his most striking work comes on trombonist Miller's dirge "Let," when he enters following the choral opening with a slow march beat that heightens the melancholy of the piece. Add to all of this consistently intriguing blowing—the saxophonists especially make their mark on Monk's "Think of One"—and the result is one satisfying session.

(3) Though not spelled out in the detail that Valega does, Jakob Davidson's *Music from the Desert* also has an ecological theme. Valega deserves kudos for including a Robinson Jeffers poem; Davidson for inspiring me to look up William Carlos Williams' "The Desert Music," which is similar in title only. Rather than the seedy border town scenes Williams portrays, Davidson's music evokes a desert landscape, a menacing one at that. His music is cinematic, delivered by a chamber quartet of two reeds with violin and cello backed by a rhythm section. The piece consists of four movements featuring the full ensemble around a core of two Free improvs that bracket a picturesque piano solo that in its scintillating clusters and sprays of notes envisions the night sky. The four movements surrounding those each has its own character. The first is eerie and spare with Blais' violin scraping against the top of her range over the harmony provided by Fuglsang's clarinet and the gravity of Ehde's cello. The rhythm section returns for "Sandstorm" with a pulsating rhythm that sets up blowing by Ballamy on tenor. "Sanddunes" emerges from the preceding languid section. The

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