

# The Vinson Valega Group | Biophilia

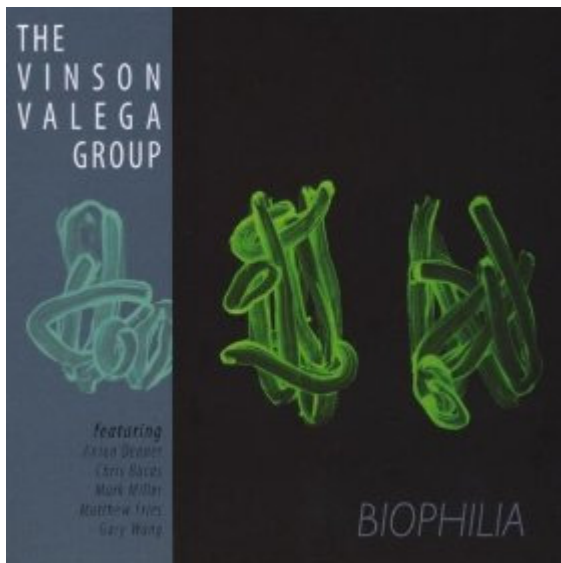
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by theurbanflux

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The Vinson Valega Group | [Biophilia](#) – [Consilience Productions, 2010]



## Vinson Valega Group - Biophilia

I'm delighted to introduce you to someone new in my book of jazz, he is an intriguing drummer, composer and arranger named *Vinson Valega* from *Washington D.C.* featuring his invigorating quintet (*The Vinson Valega Group*) on his impressive yet appetizing recording titled "*Biophilia*" with *Consilience Productions*.

The opener is the expressive "*I Knew You'd Say That*," written by keyboardist *Matthew Fries*. This gem sets the pace for what is yet to come on this impressive flight called "*Biophilia*." What I find interesting is when a virtually unknown musician like *Vinson Valega* merges his own compositions and arrangements extending his palette by reinventing classics such as Duke Ellington's "*Sunset and the Mockingbird*" leaves an indelible imprint to the heart and soul in this music.

At the third spot, Vinson showcases his penmanship by switching gears with a piece called "*A Moment of Silence*." At first glance, the illusive title of this gem springs into action engaging in off-metered improvisational romps and freely expressing his skills

with dexterous momentum as his fabulous ensemble joins in swinging with metrical patterns and cohesive swagger is absolutely flawlessly!

The title "*Biophilia*" reminds me somewhat of the interludes fans *Earth, Wind and Fire* heard intricately placed throughout their recordings over the years. In the meantime, *Valega's* group changes pace as trombonist *Mark Miller* solos on a tune written by him appropriately titled "*Let.*" What I hear from this beautiful piece is the haunting voices of chamber music softly driven by transcending melodies from the timbre of Miller's bone. Within a moment's notice, it seems as though the textures of his sound emerges from a canvas of solitude into intimate conversation in concert with infallible interplay by his ensemble reminds me why I dearly love music.

If you're going to interpret a classic jazz tune why not play music by one of the genres improvisational masters *Ornette Coleman*? On this occasion, Vinson and the gang take on "*Day By Day with Kathleen Gray.*" Frankly, I'm not familiar with this jewel by Coleman though I'll dare say Valega and his group does supreme justice to it with passionate tonality reflected through their external voices.

Valega pens the next two cuts titled "*I just Wanted to See What You Look Like*" a beautiful and memorable ballad along with another interlude etched in called "*Charm.*" At this juncture, there's six more attractive compositions remaining on this session including "*November Spring*" by *Niki Denner* featuring Fries on Rhodes Piano (always great to hear) with *Anton Denner* playing flute and alto saxophone. Tenor man *Chris Bacas* makes his contribution to the set with the tasty "*Talk Time.*" This gem is the perfect vehicle for musicians to interchange ideas by engaging effectively via their improvised solos.

The Vinson Valega Group closes the set with another jazz classic "*Think One,*" by the legendary pianist *Thelonious Monk* and the finale track written by Valega titled "*Doesn't It Feel Great to Be Alive?*" As on this cut and throughout "*Biophilia,*" these guys as seasoned players occupied with enthusiasm expressing their love and passion to play music through melodies, creativity and harmonies we expect to hear as jazz aficionados. *Biophilia* is recommended for "*citizens of jazz*" everywhere!

**The Band:**

Anton Denner – Alto Saxophone and Flute  
Chris Bacas – Tenor and Soprano Saxophone  
Mark Miller – Trombone  
Gary Wang – Bass  
Matthew Fries – Piano and Fender Rhodes  
Vinson Valega – Drums

...: Reviewed by *Rob Young* ...: