

The Vinson Valega Group | Biophilia

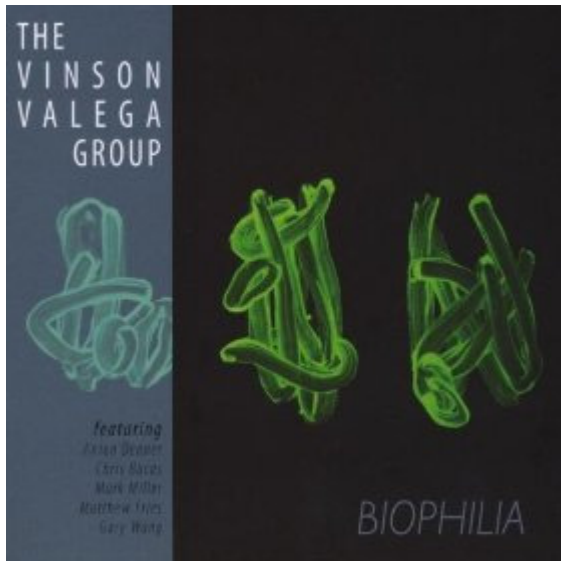
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by theurbanflux

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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

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