

[Review Pete Robbins]

Altoist Pete Robbins' *Do The Hate Laugh Shimmy* functions like a treatise on synthesis, where disparate influences are not so much juxtaposed as woven together with style and grace. This CD makes a clear statement that these are times that celebrate a storied history of musical innovation. What felt like a gradual exploration of evolving alternatives in the 20th Century is now reaching a level of refinement, where today's innovators are synthesizing the work of predecessors who had done the same themselves. While this is clearly a jazz record through and through, this is a form of jazz that's created by someone who came up listening to popular music of his day—and at this point, that means guitar-based rock music from the 1990s. Some of the more contemporary influences that are listed on Robbins' bio include glitch-based 500th-generation sound artists like The Books or Autechre and art rock like Deerhoof and Dirty Projectors.

The record has a different lineup on every track, but the album was recorded in one long session, with folks dropping in and out, so the sense of unity is palpable throughout. Besides leader Robbins, bassist Thomas Morgan is the other constant presence on all tracks and his assured touch enables profoundly unique statements even in his most supportive and understated contributions. The presence of Craig Taborn and Ben Monder is notable and the superb playing by all the musicians makes this record explosive and touching throughout. Drummers Danny Weiss and Tyshawn Sorey bring brilliance and nuance to the music both in feeling and in texture. Guitarists Ryan Blotnick and Mike Gamble, keyboardist Eliot Cardinaux, saxophonist Sam Sadigursky and trumpeter Jesse Neumann all work with Robbins in other situations, having all recorded or toured with Robbins' bands *Centric* and *Silent Z*.

Many tracks are set up by wonderful ambient guitar and keyboard textures, framing the music with mood and atmosphere. “Everyone Else Is Disappointing” is a standout track: an epic work with an arching structure, from the textural introduction and simply-stated theme for alto saxophone and contrabass to the wonderful unaccompanied solo by Morgan and anthemic concluding theme. Snaking polyphonic lines wind their way through “Glad to Ask” and canonic staggered entrances give “Assumpta Est Maria” a delicate richness.

Eclecticism is often used to create a sense of over-saturation, but here, the interaction of contrasting influences never gives the listener the sense of dizziness that often results from more stark juxtaposition. Robbins has created music where his instrumental virtuosity and that of his constituents serves as a focal point and binding agent. This gives sustainability and depth to the music, creating a unified beauty that seamlessly integrates a feeling of familiarity with a wide array of unlikely stylistic inflections.

By Wilbur MacKenzie

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