

[Review Pete Robbins]

-saxophonist Robbins's writing on these 10 originals never settles for theme-solos-theme variations. So Craig Taborn's agitated outtaspaces Rhodes solo on the laconic "Anyway, And" gets reassurance from moaning trumpet and alto. "Everyone Else Is Disappointing" travels from a brief loopy guitar intro to straight-ahead alto and walking bass, then picks up tempo with the drums before breaking for a little alto-tenor adagio, a few bars of funk, and another adagio. Robbins's adaptation of Carlo Gesualdo's "Assumpta est Maria" sets everyone in antiphonal motion — alto, clarinet, tenor, Rhodes, guitar, bass, and drums. Robbins likes start-stop themes; angular leaps; jazz, funk, and rock rhythms; loops; fx; shifts from strict time to no time; and plenty of guitar — Jim Hall soft and sweet, as on Ryan Blotnick's turn with the Gesualdo, or Mike Gamble playing Frisell-like spaciousness on "Mid-September and the Five Weeks After," or rock power chords and chanka-chank upstrokes on "Stiff Upper Lip." Robbins's own alto is worth a show of its own, fluid, unpredictable patterns with a touch of rasp. But this disc isn't about his horn — it's about his pieces and his band.

By Jon Garelick

The Phoenix Media/Communications Group / May 12, 2008