

[Review Pete Robbins]

The title of saxophonist/composer Pete Robbins' new 2008 effort is named after an e.e.cummings poem. And while he's uncertain about the literal meaning, the phrase instills a sense of endearment, or perhaps the act of morphing a negative into a positive. No doubt, Robbins' third solo outing looms as a logical progression of his spiraling notoriety within global jazz circles.

The saxophonist's melodies are paced with unorthodox time changes and fluid grooves, marked by a classic, jazz-fusion edge in spots. He ambarks upon sinuous harmonizing activities with alternating keyboardists Craig Taborn and Eliot Cardinaux. In effect, Robbins' comps are often teeming with animated structures and spacious improvising endeavors.

Guitarist Ben Monder lays out some spacey, fuziod guitar chords on "Fairmount, where the band eventually segues into crashing crescendos. Then on "Anyway, and," Taborn unleashes a cool-groove Fender Rhodes solo atop Tyshawn Sorey's thrashing drum parts and Robbins' resonating alto sax lines. Here and throughout, the band works through various rhythmic metrics, largely spiced with darting choruses and odd-metered pulses

During the piece titled "Assumpta est Maria," the ensemble touches upon elements of Americana-tinged jazz and world music, as the artists move forward with an edgy gait that is nicely contrasted by lighthearted overtones. Elsewhere, Robbins' works consist of fractured themes and multidirectional flows. But they pull out the stops on the hard-hitting jazz-rock number titled "Stiff Upper Lip, highlighted by Mike Gamble's crunch chords and trumpeter Jesse Neuman's frisky unison motifs with the leader. A compelling and irrefutably, entertaining effort it is.

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JazzReview.com