

NAIVETE'

This is a session I really wanted to relax and enjoy but which definitely makes the ears work hard. What we have here is a stellar quintet of very accomplished players working in a post-bop mode, verging on the free. They have played together from time to time and have recorded before, as you can tell by the certainty and crispness of their ensemble and support work. Scott's trumpet sound is unusually mellifluous, as if the instrument was made from something softer than brass. Perry's tenor is breathy with more than a hint of challenge. I love the way they explore the harmonic byways together. There's much thoughtful probing from Versace's piano, coupled with twinkling runs, while Hebert's bass and William's drums deliver the most flexible kind of backing. In fact, the improvisations here are by far the most fascinating and listenable and stimulating aspect of the recording.

But all of these compositions are by Dave Scott, and is the first thing that strikes you is that he likes to set a challenge. His themes have an almost mathematical quality, as if he is setting a tough test for the musicians (for which, by the way, they all get a pass *cum laude*). But there is little sense of melody in these creations, even less than you will find in Parker's adaptations of the 1940s and 50s. That said, the second track called "Nothing Is Sacred" is a brilliant exercise in dissonance which maybe shows where this band wants to go, into uncharted territory. Scott's horn here swarms around the medium register against arco bass and diffident drumming. Perry's sax comes in with exploratory phrases. This is where I think I begin to understand the band's group dynamic. Versace's churning piano leads into a passage of free expression and we go out to some toothaching ensemble chords that tells us this kind of music has more than a pretty face. But with "Chromaddict", the soul-inflected theme produces one of the more accessible pieces and features bursts of delightful group improvisation. So there's much scope here for a thoughtful listener who appreciates music that raises questions.

Anthony Troon (Jazz Review, August-September 2007)