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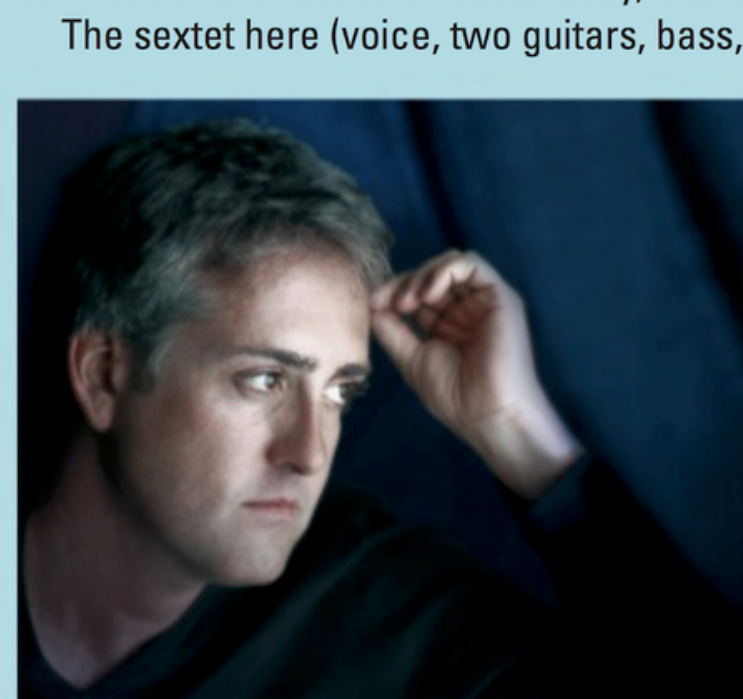
Old Flames Never Die

Peter Campbell



The best album of the year (so far) crept up and caught me on the cusp of the virus, but thankfully in time to keep me company through this and future madnesses. Peter Campbell's own website doesn't tell much of a story—from NYC, educated in the U.S. and Canada, studied with Joyce McLean at Juilliard, working for 30 years, but only three albums, at least since his move to Toronto in 2012.

And frankly, a bit of intrigue works for the man. He seems to have mysteriously materialized at the microphone, not a frightening ghost but an airy, melancholy spirit getting intimate with that mic and a gossamer-small audience in a hypothetical cabaret. Noisier, brassier acts might take his place later on; but that means nothing. He knows the fleetingness of the moment and the uncertainty of the future, so he accedes to the now and occasionally, understandably, hides in the past.



"Grasping the happiness in communicating sad": Peter Campbell

The sextet here (voice, two guitars, bass, keyboards, trumpet) oddly includes no drums to stomp or snap through the mix. Everything slides smooth here, but vivid enough to keep clear of muzak. On Songbook classics by Berlin, Coleman/Leigh, and Warren/Gershwin and more modern compositions by Jimmy Webb, Joni Mitchell, and Fred Hersch, Campbell sings ahead, behind, and squarely on the beat, never muffing a move, sounding old and young, male and female; and yes, sad, but grasping the happiness in communicating sad. The soft pride, worn lightly, of a job well done, a vocation fulfilled. **ANDREW HAMLIN**

Compared to that night in Helsinki, *The Dead Don't Dream* at first sounds tame. But continued listening reveals that Pohjola is the same adventurer. He creates free designs in space rather than movements through time. Forms are left open and resolutions are transitory. The pianist in this superb Finnish quartet, Tuomo Prättälä, does not comp. Instead he arrays points of light from piano or electronics in an atmosphere that is separate from Pohjola until it surrounds him.

The reason that this extremely modern music is accessible is that Pohjola is first a communicator. His brassy, clarion trumpet sound sits you straight up in your chair. While he plays ideas you haven't heard before, and while his thoughts don't connect as you anticipate, his journey, sometimes gradually ("Argirro"), sometimes quickly ("Wilder Brother"), always arrives at lyrical epiphanies.

Probably the single best place to discover Pohjola's unique heartfelt intellectual magic is the title track here. Prättälä's solemn chords introduce darkness, but then Pohjola plays a simple haunting melody that begins to illuminate that darkness as he comes upon new songs within the song. Pohjola has said that his music is "about embracing life in all of its complex emotions, while we still have it. After all, the dead don't dream." **THOMAS CONRAD**

MONIKA HERZIG

Eternal Dance Savant



Sure, there are more enticing ways to open a jazz album than by turning to "We Are the Champions" for inspiration. Yet pianist Monika Herzig's

harmonically fresh treatment of the Queen anthem works surprisingly well on *Eternal Dance*, for several reasons. Besides establishing the album's embracing, often exultant tone, the performance swiftly reveals Herzig's strengths as an arranger while showcasing the depth and finesse of her Sheroes ensemble. Save for the album's striking solo closer, the keyboardist is in excellent company throughout this session, supported by a rotating cast of players: flutist Jamie Baum, trombonist Reut Regev, bassist Jennifer Vincent, drummer Rosa Avila, alto saxophonist Lakecia Benjamin, guitarist Leni Stern, cellist Akua Dixon, and percussionist Mayra Casales. Small wonder, given the stellar lineup and almost palpable camaraderie, Herzig chose one more pop tune for the occasion: a newly redubbed and empowering version of David Bowie's "We Can Be (S)Heroes."

Still, the best is yet to come. Three tracks immediately stand out: Stern's whimsically animated "Rabbit"; "Dear Geri," Herzig's richly evocative tribute to the late Geri Allen; and Baum's insinuating "Seas of Change," dedicated to Greta Thunberg. Elsewhere, though often lyrical, Herzig's tunes are laced with unexpected diversions, insistent pedal tones, odd intervals, and conversational gambits. Generously showcased, her collaborators consistently enhance the arrangements, even as the focus shifts from melodic and atmospheric settings to funk, blues, and odd-meter excursions. The album's spiritual spine and centerpiece, however, is "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child." And as for its aforementioned coda, no doubt Herzig's poignant elegy "Memories of Petra" will strike a particularly resonant chord for many listeners in these unsettling times. **MIKE JOYCE**

WILL BERNARD

Freelance Subversives Ropeadope



Guitarist Will Bernard is now in his early seventies, but the California-born, Brooklyn-based late bloomer's open mind and elastic playing style have made him seem consistently younger than his age ever since he started his recording