



Black Elk's Dream
Matt Slocum (Chandra)
 by Ken Micallef

There are those rare records that cast a spell as soon as the music begins. *Black Elk's Dream* is a beautiful dream state of a recording from promising drummer Matt Slocum. His previous outings revealed a rich melodic sense and supple drumming and *Black Elk's Dream* confirms a major double-threat talent: his perceptive, at times startling, drumming recalls Jon Christensen and Paul Motian while the engrossing compositions are indebted to Wayne Shorter.

Inspired by Native American leader Black Elk as portrayed in a book by John Neihardt, Slocum composed and arranged the music for a band as telepathic as it is gifted: tenor saxophonists Walter Smith III and Dayna Stephens, pianist Gerald Clayton and bassist Massimo Biolcati. The leader's solos add weight with their surprising use of dynamics and sources but Slocum isn't the only one that shines. Clayton mines Slocum's melodies with elegance and wit and Smith and Stephens almost sound as one in their dual richness and warmth.

Much of the album is reflective and probing but seriously potent, as in opener "Pine Ridge", which floats over rubato passages and painterly drums and

then establishes a gentle pulse, with intimacy like a rising wisp of smoke. "Ghost Dance" simmers over a subtle Latin groove, Slocum extracting a wide berth of percussive sounds from his kit as the band plays a melody that seems ready to fall at any second into a Shorter composition circa Miles Davis' *Nefertiti*. "Yerazel" is by turns spectral and lovely, Stephens' roaming tenor swinging over Slocum's brushes and Clayton's fragrant comping. "Prelude" and the title track form the main theme of the recording, dense compositions written in suite-like formation. Pat Metheny's "Is This America?" plays it straight while penultimate track "A Disappearing Path" shows the group's great empathy as it rounds diverse terrain.

A thoughtful, thematic record that retains its emotional intimacy, *Black Elk's Dream* is over before you know it, demanding repeated listening.

For more information, visit mattslocumjazz.com. *Slocum* is at Jazz at Kitano Apr. 24th. See Calendar.



In The Nature of Things
Leslie Pintchik (Pintch Hard)
 by Donald Elfman

A great thing about Leslie Pintchik's music is that it defies categorizing and is simply and appealingly

expressive. Pintchik is a deft and imaginative player and a composer who understands texture, color and how best to utilize her players, working in a relaxed, assured fashion that is engaging and always intelligent.

Her newest recording features her working trio of Scott Hardy (bass) and Michael Sarin (drums) but adds the extra pleasure of some beautiful and sensitive horns, arranged by Hardy. The horns are inspired by Herbie Hancock's 1968 classic *Speak Like a Child* and are mostly used as a kind of aural backdrop to the pianist's melodic touches, but get good solo time too.

Opener "With You in Mind" is an intimate setting for Pintchik's melodic sense, subtly complemented by the delicate horns, Steve Wilson making it clear that his soprano is a rich storyteller and not just an ornament. Elsewhere he shines on alto, as does trumpeter Ron Horton, notably on "Sparkle", "Terse Tune" and "Ripe". The trio gets down on the amusing and catchy "I'd Turn Back if I Were You" and then Pintchik comes in and wails hard and funky but...not too hard. Sarin gives just the right amount of oomph for dancing and even opens with a kind of New Orleans second-line feel. A dark pulsing vamp introduces "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face" and the tune is transformed from a show-stopping anthem to a ballad of great love and feeling. Hardy's bass playing is gorgeous and gentle and he and Sarin provide just the right bottom for this stunning reading.

All the tunes here work together to find the best in the leader and her band right up to the closing "There You Go", a smoking live trio performance. *In The Nature of Things* is a spirited tribute to Hancock's album but also a beautifully detailed portrait of Leslie Pintchik.

For more information, visit lesliepintchik.com. This project is at Jazz at Kitano Apr. 25th. See Calendar.

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