

## KIND OF TRIO

IONATA/PENN/ROGERS VJ2011



Max Ionata is considered to be one of the most important jazz saxophonists working the contemporary Italian Jazz scene today. While somewhat of a late bloomer having moved to Rome in 2005, Ionata has gained considerable notoriety and reputation from international audiences and critics alike with this critic considering himself one of his more ardent fans.

Having worked the all important notable club and festival circuits in tandem with such acts as Robin Eubanks, Mike Stern and Bob Mintzer, Ionata now finds himself in as formidable and respectable a trio as you may run across on either side of the Atlantic. *Kind Of Trio* features Max Ionata on tenor saxophone, Clarence

Penn on drums and Reuben Rogers on double bass. Opening with the Clarence Penn original "Brotherhood" there is a decidedly soul-lite vibe that runs through the trio including the lyrically charged solo from double-bassist Reuben Rogers as the trio moves forward with a dynamic lyrical sense of purpose but a tasteful understatement of finesse. Ionata's tone and phrasing are the stuff saxophone dreams are made of with players working their entire career to achieve the sound that seems to pour effortlessly from Ionata's horn. While the swing is slightly dialed back there is a lingering musical sense of urgency that is captivating. The Max Ionata penned tune "Kumico" has a more post modern swing, a harder bop without the annoying edge found with players that lack the finesse or lyrical voice to make the sound work. Rogers and Penn of course anchor a stellar rhythm section with subtle nuances and controlled fury that makes the swing that much harder with only half the effort. A trio that can swing smarter but not harder is a beautiful thing. Closing with another post bop gold nugget is "Waiting For Eli" where the lyrical sense of urgency goes hand in hand with a swing that slowly creeps into your soul.

Max Ionata, Clarence Penn and Reuben Rogers are clearly masters of the musical understatement. Lyrical swing that explores the idiom to the fullest without self indulgence or overkill.

5 Easy Stars!

Tracks: Brotherhood; Con Alma; Kumico; But; Out Back; Nuovo Cinema Paradiso - Love There; The Change; To Be; Raven; Aurora; Waiting For Eli.

Personnel: Max Ionata: tenor saxophone; Clarence Penn: drums; Reuben Rogers: double-bass.

**J FOCUS REVIEW | RECORDS**



## **MAX IONATA/CLARENCE PENN/REUBEN ROGERS KIND OF TRIO**

JANDO MUSIC/VIA VENETO JAZZ, 2011 (EMI)

*Max Ionata (ten); Clarence Penn (batt); Reuben Rogers (cb)*

Negli ultimi dieci anni Max Ionata si è conquistato un posto solido nella scena mainstream italiana, grazie a uno stile che affonda le radici nella classicità hard bop, coniugandola con un suono robusto ma sempre ben controllato. Ionata si muove con equilibrio fra gli ingombranti modelli che il suo strumento potrebbe offrire: si potrebbero elencare tutte le possibili influenze, Joe Lovano in testa, ma è più giusto dire che quelle influenze sono state oramai assimilate in un linguaggio che, pur muovendosi nel solco della tradizione, rivela un'indiscutibile personalità. Questa prova in trio, con due sideman di statura internazionale, è una dimostrazione della raggiunta maturità del sassofonista, che affronta il programma, in gran parte di originali, con *aplomb* e sicurezza. "Kind Of Trio" è fatto di fraseggi fluidi ed eloquenti, ma privi di esibizionismi tecnici, di assolo coesi e logici, che sfruttano tutta l'estensione del tenore, conditi da un costante dialogo con la ritmica. (SP)

Brotherhood / Con Alma / Kumico / But / Out Back / Nuovo Cinema Paradiso  
- Love Theme / The Change / To Be / Raven / Aurora / Waiting For Eli



**Monday, 7 November 2011**

## **Max Ionata, Clarence Penn, Reuben Rogers - Kind Of Trio**

Label: Via Veneto Jazz/Jando Music

Released: October 2011

With an album title that has a clear echo of what is probably the best selling jazz album of all time, *Kind Of Trio* is likely to catch your attention. This title may or may not have been chosen for that effect, but from the very start it's clear to the listener that this trio have a great synergy and have produced a set of tunes full of spontaneity and inventiveness.

The unit is headed by Max Ionata, nowadays clearly established as one of the leading tenor saxophonists on the European scene. He has also built up a substantial fanbase in Japan with releases such as *Inspiration* and *Coffee Time* on *Albore Jazz* and *Night Walk* (as part of the Quartetto Trevi) on the *Norma Blu* imprint, as well as guest appearances on projects from Japanese artists (TRI4TH and Tatsuo Sunaga). For this new project on the Italian Via Veneto Jazz and Jando Music labels, Ionata is joined by a talented rhythm section in the form of drummer Clarence Penn and bassist Reuben Rogers, who have worked with a number of renowned artists and are both well-known names on the New York circuit.

The saxophone trio format allows a lot of space and freedom for musicians to work in, and this is evident on this album from the word go, with *Brotherhood* having a memorable main melody but also featuring extended passages of improvisation. The whole album has a very live feel to it and as a listener, you get the feeling that you're enjoying the privilege of a private performance. The eleven tracks include nine originals (with Max Ionata and Clarence Penn contributing four apiece and one tune from Reuben Rogers) as well as Dizzy Gillespie's *Con Alma*, and a cover of the Ennio Morricone composition *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso - Love Theme*.

Following on from the opener *Brotherhood* is *Con Alma*, rearranged here by Reuben Rogers, transforming the tune from a Latin jazz number into a contemporary workout which is both beautifully spacious and rhythmically complex. *Kumico*, a more uptempo number allows all three musicians to let loose with some impressive solos, while *But* is a slower tune with a slightly more conventional structure and a memorable and slightly melancholic main sax riff.

*Out Back* opens with a strong insistent bassline and some danceable rhythms over the top of which Ionata blows some mind-blowing sax grooves, and is without a doubt one of the most instant tunes on the album. From the uptempo grooves of *Out Back*, the mood switches to the seductive and sensuous with the cover of *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso - Love Theme*, a beautiful rendition of Morricone's soundtrack.

Other tracks worth listening out for are the foot-tapping bop number *The Change*, and the freer, more complex tune *Raven*, that takes the listener on varied and expansive journey in just four and a half minutes.

*Kind Of Trio* is a hugely rewarding listen and album that grows on repeated listens. It's the outstanding musicianship of all three musicians involved that really makes the album so strong, and this explains goes a long way to explaining the title. This is not one single musician's project, but a kind of trio made up three highly talented players all bringing their own distinctive ideas to the project. Definitely worth checking out.

## INTERSTATIC

## «InterStatic»

RareNoise RNRO26, distr. Goodfellas

Stills / First Vision / Flatland 1 / Washed Up / Reel Time / Interstatic / Water Music / The Elverum Incident / Americana / Flatland 2.

Roy Powell (org.), Jacob Young (chit.), Jarle Vespestad (batt.). Proto, Oslo, 2011.

Residente da tempo a Oslo, l'inglese Powell vanta collaborazioni che spaziano da Anthony Braxton a Naked Truth. Young è uno degli artisti emergenti di casa Ecm, mentre Jespestad è membro del quartetto di Tord Gustavsen.

Senz'altro Powell attinge alle innovazioni del Larry Young di «Unity» ma sono evidenti i richiami al suo contributo ai Lifetime di Tony Williams, spartiacque tra jazz e rock; così come sono palpabili i riferimenti al suo apporto fondamentale a «Devotion» di John McLaughlin e a «Love Devotion Surrender», confermato da questi con Carlos



Santana. First Vision e Interstatic ne sono una prova tangibile.

Inoltre, si possono istituire paralleli credibili con i trii di John Abercrombie: quello con Dan Wall e Adam Nussbaum, e ancor prima con Jan Hammer e Jack DeJohnette, nell'esordio di «Timeless». Peraltro, The Elverum Incident può richiamare le torrenziali improvvisazioni degli Allman Brothers, mentre i due episodi di Flatland evocano vagamente i climi psichedelici dei Grateful Dead.

Con la sua freschezza il lavoro del trio tende a dimostrare che esistono ancora margini di esplorazione in quello che viene oggi classificato (e a volte sbrigativamente liquidato) come jazz rock o fusion.

Boddi

## IONATA-PENN-ROGERS

## «Kind Of Trio»

Via Veneto Jazz VVJ 074, distr. EMI

Brotherhood / Con Alma / Kumico / But / Out Black / Nuovo cinema Paradiso - Love Theme / The Change / To Be / Raven / Aurora / Waiting For Eli.

Max Ionata (ten.), Reuben Rogers (cb.), Clarence Penn (batt.). Roma, dal 22 al 25-3-11.

Il tenorista abruzzese (classe 1972) si unisce a due tra i più raffinati sessionmen statunitensi (Rogers è l'attuale contrabbassista di Charles Lloyd e Penn ha suonato con Dave Douglas e Uri Caine) dando forma a un jazz pacatamente appassionato, pieno di sfumature timbriche e ritmiche (che risaltano al massimo grazie a una registrazione impeccabilmente fedele) e melodicamente libero di vagare a lungo per ampi territori, mancando i percorsi dettati da uno strumento d'accompagnamento armonico. Con un repertorio che comprende



solo due brani non propri - Con Alma di Gillespie (completamente riveduto) e il tema di Nuovo cinema Paradiso di Morricone (scarnificato all'osso) - i tre, pariteticamente e integrandosi alla perfezione, danno vita a un jazz equilibrato e compatto, elegante e a tratti pensieroso, pieno di swing e continue trovate, che non si fa mai prendere da eccessiva foga pur sapendo rimanere sempre dinamico e catapultante. Modelli di Ionata possono essere Rollins, Coltrane e (per certe spigolosità) Bergonzi, filtrati da un distinto melodizzare mediterraneo.

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