

PETER'S PLAYSTATION



UNDERWATER

WITH MICHAEL ZISMAN • BANDONEON

+ ANDI PUPATO • PERCUSSION

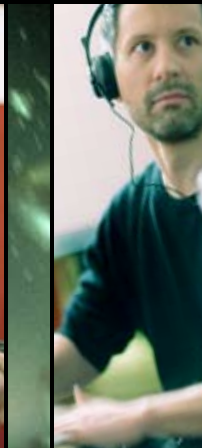
Listen to UNDERWATER – and you will hear things you may not have expected to hear. This is more than just another contribution to the huge catalogue of well-made jazz productions, played immaculately by professionally trained musicians. The members of Peter's Playstation, now featuring rising star Michael Zisman on bandoneon, and the distinguished guests that appear in this production certainly have an excellent command of their instruments, but what Peter Preibisch gets out of them is more than the brilliant musical routine we have got so accustomed to - and, let us be honest here, often enjoy hearing too. This CD is again rather 'off-jazz' (that was the title of their last TCB publication), or we might even say 'beyond-jazz' as the musicians have obviously digested their jazz idiom, but clearly go a step further.

How then is one supposed to write about music that floats outside the usual categories and therefore defies description in common technical terms? Making use of metaphorical language we might say: it does not shout at you, it is rather cool most of the time, almost understated, somehow reminiscent of the great and late Modern Jazz Quartet in that respect. It breathes a similar kind of artistic maturity. Or, paraphrasing an observation once made by Vladimir Nabokov regarding his own writing: what just looks like a brownish-green leaf at first sight may turn out to be a butterfly whose wings display an immense and exciting variety of colour on the inside. The more you listen to Underwater, the more butterflies you will find, and they come from all the individual players as well as from the band as a whole.

The music on UNDERWATER blossoms under Peter Preibisch's masterful direction as a composer, drummer and leader. He has provided eight of the nine wonderful tunes that appear on the CD (Drawn being an original composition by guitarist Eric Hunziker), all of them offering ideal platforms for improvisation. Each piece has its own mood, and the musicians have the sensitivity and skill to capture and develop it within the bounds set by the composition. Peter has also done a fine job in respect of instrumentation: most instruments used are of a less intense kind (Fender Rhodes, acoustic bass, bandoneon, bass clarinet), and those that do have the capacity for intensity (drums, electric guitar, percussion) are being played in an appropriately controlled way. Although a number of amazing solos are to be heard, nobody is trying to put themselves in the foreground at the cost of the overall effect of the music. In other words: the high-end components of Peter's Playstation are fully compatible and the resultant compilation a real treat to hear!



UNDERWATER, the title tune, is a lovely opener that seems to establish the general mood and the artistic quality of the whole CD: serene, transparent, with a discreet yet solid rhythmic foundation. The soft sound of water heard initially opens both our ears and hearts, and we are taken into the world of underwater music where we can hear a faraway slow-motion guitar solo by Eric Hunziker that might make us imagine a submarine slightly off course. This is followed by a highly original solo by Gregor Müller on Fender Rhodes recalling the sound of droplets falling irregularly and supported by guest artist Andi Pupati sneaking in with his shaker. We are now definitely back on course. Andi, by the way, has made a distinguished international career as a percussionist with the likes of Andreas Vollenweider, Gotthard, Arthur Blythe, and Ronin.



New band member Michael Zisman, probably THE bandoneon player of the younger generation (he also appears on Paquito d'Rivera's latest production!), provides the intro to SLEEPLESS, taking the music up to the surface again. This is a rhythmically elaborate piece that might well cause insomnia if it weren't for the warm, delicate and mysterious sound coming from the bandoneon. Thomas Schenkel contributes a melodic bass solo before Michael takes over again for the final theme. There is one of the few brief solo statements by the band leader just before the last note.

The theme of GOING SOMEWHERE ELSE, light as a feather, hovers above an original, Latin-inspired rhythm that is defined by keyboard, drums and Thomas' fairly substantial bass. Eric and Michael tempt the rest of the band to take off during their solos, which they do to an extent that just enables them to return to the initial lightness in a harmonious way.

MEMPHIS MOON opens with a funky guitar and cajon pattern that sets the rhythm for the whole piece: it makes you want to move your limbs. Both Michael and Eric give a virtuoso performance in their solos, still keeping in mind, however, that music is communication. There's an exciting 4x4 exchange towards the end between Fender Rhodes, drums and percussion, and a surprising coda rounds the tune off after the final theme.

The beautiful melody of ANOTHER LAST NIGHT is given tension and significance by an interesting chord progression sketched by keyboard, guitar and bass with a lot of musical taste; Peter's intricate brushing job keeps up the pulse of this slow-moving ballad that evokes feelings of tenderness and human kindness in the listener. Simon Wyrsh, young and aspiring guest artist on bass clarinet, and Michael Zisman play a hot solo each; fortunately they are given all the space they need for meaningful expression by the rhythm section, which keeps its cool.

MINI is a rather unorthodox piece, which is exemplified by Gregor's wild intro, the interesting theme that seems to consist of a number of mini-dialogues between different sections of the band, and the rhythmic variation during the two solos which is skilfully directed by the band leader. Heterogeneous - but it all measures up!

Eric Hunziker's DRAWN is based on two pairs of chords, the first of which creates tension that is resolved by the second. A challenging harmonic basis for the two soloists which gives the players a lot of freedom at the same time. The hypnotic Fender Rhodes ostinato that starts the tune remains in the listeners' ears even when it is no longer being played.

After a fine intro by Andi and Peter the theme of AFRO GREEN is presented over a bass ostinato. Whilst the first solo (guitar) sticks to the original Afro rhythm, the band bursts into exciting up-tempo swing for Gregor's solo. It is up to the bass player to calm things down again with his rhythmic and down-to-earth solo so that the band can round the piece off appropriately.

It is only right that Leo, Peter's second son, should also get a song from papa after Tim got one on 'Off Jazz'. LOVELY LITTLE LEO takes a bossa-like rhythm as a starting point and develops it further in accordance with the needs of the soloists. Everybody contributes a solo except Peter, who must be aware that real fatherly love does not mean filling the son with superficial admiration.



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