

"Woodclock" - All About Jazz

Austrian, Vienna-based double bassist Gina Schwarz found a true, like-minded musical partner that helped her realize her irreverent vision for today's jazz. American drummer Jim Black joined Schwarz's quintet for her fifth album, solidifying her reputation as a "live-cell therapy to jazz," an opinionated musician who likes to play with opposites—wise and free, gentle and wild, contemplative and energetic, organic and eccentric, blending acoustic instruments with electronics.

When you think more about it, these descriptions characterize Black's great groups since the beginning of the nineties. His bands refused to play by the rules or to be relegated to any stylistic definition. Such were his trio with saxophonist Ellery Eskelin and accordionist Andrea Parkins, The Tiny Bell Trio led by trumpeter Dave Douglas or his own groups with reeds player Chris Speed as Pachora, Alasnoaxis and Human Feel.

Schwarz quintet, with keyboardist Benjamin Shatz, guitarist Heimo Trixner and reedist Fabian Rucker, add an updated, refined Viennese touch to the distinct, uninhibited drumming of Black. The clever, fast shifting rhythm section of Schwarz and Black is now embraced by open and intense interplay that simply calls to mess with with the pulse—stretching it, mimicing it, beating it at its own game. Together the quintet charge Schwarz's original compositions with passionate urgency, still, enveloped in an emphatic interplay.

Schwarz's brilliant arrangement of Edgar Allen Poe poem "The Bells" as the title piece, features vocalist Marco Blascetta and reflects faithfully Woodclock's sonic vision. It is an intriguing, provocative piece, building its tension skillfully, following the suggestive poetic lines: "Keeping time, time, time, / In a sort of Runic Rhyme, / To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells / From the bells, bells, bells, bells, bells, / Bells, bells, bells—." The heartfelt tribute to the late Charlie Haden, "From Shenandoah" highlights Schwarz beautiful, folksy bass solo, gifted with an immediate, emotional impact. The short free-improvised duets of Schwarz and Black, "Rats & Bats" and "Broadcasters at work," cement the dynamic, rhythmic language that both have developed together, spiced with sharp sense of humor.

Track Listing: Dr. Jekyll & Mrs. Hyde; Loophouse; Woodclock; Morpheus; From Shenandoah; Rats & Bats; Ping Pong; Broadcasters At Work.

Personnel: Fabian Rucker: saxophone, bass clarinet; Benjamin Schatz: piano, keyboards; Heimo Trixner: guitar; Gina Schwarz: double bass; Jim Black: drums; Marco Blascetta: vocals (3).

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