

Novoa/Carter/Mela Trio, Vol. 1
Novoa/Kamaguchi/Cleaver Trio, Vol. 2
Eva Novoa (577 Records)
 by Brad Cohan

In the crowded and talented field of the NYC jazz scene, Eva Novoa falls into the unofficial category of “best kept secret.” Yet, the Barcelona-born, Brooklyn-based pianist, composer and improviser has been an ever-present force with a growing recorded output. Novoa’s musical palette is far-reaching, cerebral, yet oh-so-limber and superbly fluid. Over several albums as leader, she’s operated on the fringes of traditional jazz, free improvisation and classical music with aplomb, the latter in which she’s trained.

The debut of a stupendous trio, which sees Novoa joining forces with winds maestro Daniel Carter and Cuban drums titan Francisco Mela, titled *Novoa/Carter/Mela Trio, Vol. 1*, rises to out-of-body experience levels for the listener. Recorded in 2021, this union yields the fruit of those first-time sessions where lightning strikes, an instant rapport transpires and magical moments ensue. The first installment this new group offers is flush with wizardry. That sweeping dynamic is evidenced by the all-encompassing instrumental prowess of Novoa and Carter, who pepper the three epic-length improvisations with a sound cornucopia. The twenty-minute opener, “Aire”, is a melodically hard-charging *tour de force*. In the airy and richly-layered sound

rainbow, one is caressed by Carter’s warm flute and clarinet shapes, Novoa’s meditative and freewheeling piano and Fender Rhodes passages and spurts, and Mela’s swinging, feathery beats. On “Hasta Mañana Vida Mía”, Mela puts on a percussive and vocal show of force, a high-spirited drum circle-style odyssey that nods to his Cuban heritage. Meanwhile, “Fuego”, which Novoa drives with her bluesy Fender Rhodes action, is a scorching number that Carter makes even hotter with his soulful saxophone salvos. Let’s hope this trio’s next volume arrives sooner than later.

Novoa, alongside her longtime bass cohort Masa Kamaguchi and drummer Gerald Cleaver, represents another exceptional trio and one that demonstrates the pianist’s deft skill set and thoughtful approach in navigating all roads. *Novoa/Kamaguchi/Cleaver Trio, Vol. 2* (the follow-up to the trio’s 2023 *Vol. 1* release) is worlds apart from this trio’s debut album. The two albums aren’t meant to be listened to back-to-back, but the breadth of aesthetics and vibes of each is palpable. This album’s first two tracks, “Modus Vivendi” and “Triangles for G”, build on themes of the blues, a style the pianist has an affinity for, especially when she latches on to a sizzling lyrical riff amid the walking grooves laid out by Kamaguchi and Cleaver. The direction then takes a left turn into the sonically abstract on the psychedelic vistas of “Popcorn in Your Brain” and “Gonga 2” before Novoa and company really go deep into the otherworld on explorative mind-benders, “Mucho Masa” and “Palomitas De Maiz”.

These two terrific sets should help shed the tag of “secrecy” and place Novoa into avant-jazz household name status.

For more info visit 577records.bandcamp.com. Novoa is at Ibeam Brooklyn Jun. 21. See Calendar.



Pulsar
William Parker, Hugo Costa, Philipp Ernsting
(NoBusiness)
 by Ken Waxman

Having spent his career playing with musicians internationally, such as saxophonists Peter Brötzmann and David S. Ware and drummer-percussionist Hamid Drake, it’s no surprise that NYC bassist William Parker joined Hugo Costa (alto) and Philipp Ernsting (drums), who usually work as a duo, to create this vibrant trio. Similarly, and expectedly, his improvisational skills adhere impeccably to the musical qualities of the long-constituted twosome. Both Rotterdam-based (although Costa is Portuguese and Ernsting, German), part of this clear amalgamation is that both operate in the same free jazz milieu as Parker. The drummer, who also recorded the session, has been part of the Kinematic Ensemble, while the saxophonist has recorded with fellow Lusitanians such as pianist Rodrigo Pinheiro.

In sync during three ever-freer improvisations, with each track subsequently briefer than the preceding one, the trio mostly explores sequences that, in part, depend on Parker’s guitar-like facility with string throbs and power pumps. Added are Ernsting’s cymbal accents and percussion skills, ranging from heavy backbeats to the

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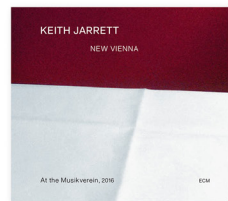


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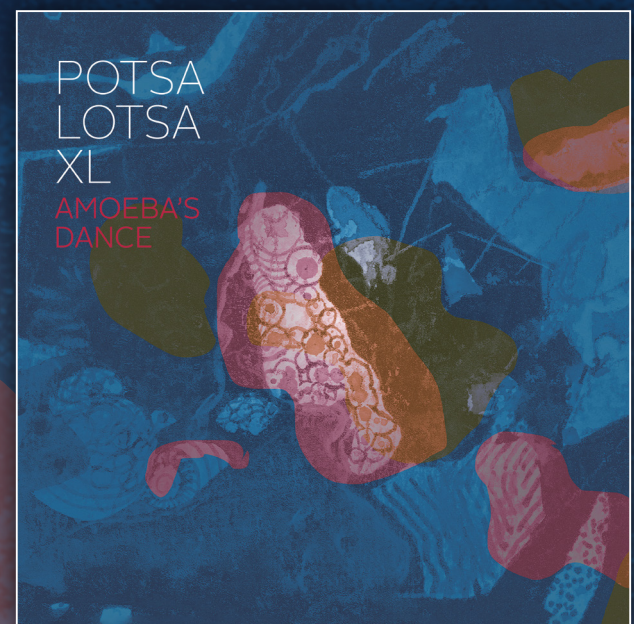
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