

second composition has a brighter character, with vibraphonist's lines sparkling in crystal clarity, while Markowitz provides vibrant counter-lines. The final Locke piece, by contrast, explores more poignant territory, as he employs a plaintive theme that is both delicate and fragile. The pianist's accompaniment is understated yet profound, amplifying the emotional resonance. Markowitz' three compositions enrich the album's variety. "Seven" is rhythmically daring, with shifting meters that challenge the two to maintain balance without losing momentum. On "Sno' Peas", the pianist subtly restructures the piece. Meanwhile, his partner injects a lively freshness into the theme, demonstrating the skills needed to reimagine familiar material while keeping its appeal. "Ambushed", on the other hand, conveys drama and unpredictability as it begins with sudden bursts of energy, hinting at confrontation. The vibraphonist's sharp staccato interjections and Markowitz' forceful chords create a dramatic exchange until the piece reaches a hard-fought equilibrium.

The album's emotional highlight is "Soul Eyes" (Waldron). In this performance, Locke and Markowitz show restraint and reverence, allowing the piece's natural beauty to unfold gently. The vibraphonist's luminous touch on the theme, along with the pianist's lyrical voicings, demonstrate their empathic sensitivity, resulting in a truly heartfelt performance. Their approach to all the pieces in this recital blends tradition with innovation, reaffirming Locke and Markowitz' shared commitment to honor jazz history while showcasing their own distinctive voice.

For more info visit ecnmusic.com. The album release concert is at Deer Head Inn (Delaware Water Gap, PA) Nov. 1. See 100 Miles Out.



The Last Quintet
Extraordinary Popular Delusions
 (Corbett vs Dempsey)
 by Ken Waxman

The Last Quintet is probably the last session recorded by Chicago-based multi-reedist Mars Williams (1955-2023), whose cancer took his life less than three months later, the two-year deathiversary of which we commemorate this month. Williams, who worked with everyone from the Psychedelic Furs to Peter Brötzmann, was a founding member of Extraordinary Popular Delusions (EPD), playing sopranino, soprano, alto and tenor saxophones, as well as zither, whistles, electronic devices and toys. With Jim Baker (piano, analog synthesizer, viola), Brian Sandstrom (bass, guitar, six-string electric bass, electronics) and Steve Hunt (drums, percussion, glockenspiel, miscellaneous paraphernalia), EPD had regular club gigs for more than 15 years. When unavailable, Williams was spelled by Edward Wilkerson Jr., but this album captures one of the few times Wilkerson's tenor, alto, clarinet, didgeridoo and oud played alongside Williams. Wilkerson led 8 Bold Souls, the unique but undersung AACM mini-orchestra, while the others are veterans of bands including the NRG Ensemble and Witches & Devils.

With double-reed expression paramount, melody isn't the first noun suggested as the two circle around variations of multiphonics and extended techniques, while Sandstrom and Hunt express as many backing textures as they can, moving from instrument to instrument. The one unperturbed player seems to be Baker, who mostly sticks to the piano during the three protracted tracks. From slow developments to curvaceous forward motion, high-pitched and pedal point chording, his showpiece is the 34-minute plus "Blue Mars". After an introduction with sweeps and stops, his patterns take in romantic asides and high-pitched tinkles before adding to the tension with tones ranging from harpsichord-like plucks, measured keyboard pressure and finally a harp-like buzz. Meanwhile mixed high- and low-pitched saxophone splatters and peeps are in the foreground, projecting just about every variation possible from sopranissimo screams to clarion pitches.

With *Ascension*-like overblowing and harsh emphasis at a premium throughout, there's no argument as to the power of both reed players or their contrapuntal skills. However, with constant reed blends and equal squalls, squeaks and stutters, only when Wilkerson blows some didgeridoo notes or clarinet trills is he positively identified. Additionally, the only indication that Williams is playing is on "Red Mars" when he chortles within his horn's body tube, mocking Baker's formal pianism.

The sheer dynamism of the two horns plus the in-sync creativity of the rhythm section means that *The Last Quintet* is not a delusion but extraordinary and one of Williams more notable discs. It's too bad the title is prescient as well as reflective.

For more info visit corbettvsdempsey.com



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