



Hercules
Mátyás Bartha Trio (featuring Scott Robinson)
(Bartha)
by Terrell K. Holmes

Hungarian pianist Mátyás Bartha strikes international gold with his new album, *Hercules*. With American Danny Ziemann (bass), Austrian Christian Salfellner (drums) and another American in Scott Robinson (tenor), the quartet plays a selection of standards, show tunes and originals that vibrantly celebrate the hard bop tradition.

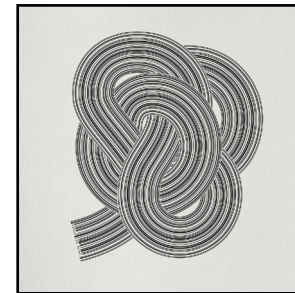
The leader's "You Dig", a tune inspired by a phrase said often by the late trumpeter Jim Rotondi, opens the album. The warm tonality of Robinson's midrange tenor defines confidence and sophistication, while Bartha's deft, crisp solo shows how quick he is on his harmonic feet. There's a downshift to a lilting arrangement of "I Concentrate on You" (Cole Porter) whose vibe recalls drummer Vernel Fournier's patented beat on Ahmad Jamal's classic version of "Poinciana" (Nat Simon, Buddy Bernier). Robinson expertly navigates his instrument with voices approximating that of a singer. His rapid-fire survey of the horn's range, from high-pitched cries to guttural growls mirrors the deepest emotions of the most impassioned vocalist. Ziemann

and Salfellner, a propulsion duo throughout, are at their best on "A Lot of Living to Do" (from the musical *Bye Bye Birdie*). Bartha swings ferociously, building complex chord structures at breakneck speed without a single misstep.

On "Stairway to the Stars" (by Matty Malneck and Frank Signorelli), Salfellner's brushes and Ziemann's reflective pizzicato complement Robinson, who, with an economy of notes and some well-timed key changes, provides a prime example of how to play a ballad. Bartha's sleek title track sounds like it has strands of "Caravan" (Juan Tizol) and Dizzy Gillespie's "A Night in Tunisia" in its double helix, which underscores this album's bop pedigree. "(I'm Afraid) The Masquerade Is Over" (Allie Wrubel) is usually played at heartache tempo but this arrangement is a joyous, foot-tapping workout, a celebration of freedom rather than a torch song of regret. The quartet's take on "Portions" (Thad Jones) is pitch perfect, with excellent playing all around and a surprising stride piano segment. The album closes on an optimistic note with Charles Stouse's "Tomorrow" (from *Annie*), a pleasing ending to a work of impressive depth, range and color.

Bartha and the quartet bring it on in *Hercules*, and if jazz fans are lucky this group will be prominent on the scene for many years, particularly with their special guest, Scott Robinson (who, on another recent recording with this exact group, *Call of the Taragato*, plays tárogató, the traditional woodwind instrument native to the pianist's country).

For more info visit matyasbartha.com. Robinson's *Call of the Taragato* is at Smalls Aug. 14-15 (with Mátyás Bartha). Robinson is also at Ear Inn Aug. 23 (with Jon-Erik Kellso's EarRegulars) and Zinc Bar Aug. 26 (with Kelly Green). See Calendar.



BaRcoDe
Ben Wendel (Edition)
by Ken Waxman

As a musician usually involved in more mainstream and contemporary projects, on *BaRcoDe*, Ben Wendel frames his tenor and EWI within the distinctive sustain and reverberations from four vibraphones and affiliated instruments. The Canada-born, Brooklyn-based Wendel, also a producer, has worked with just about everyone from Gerald Clayton to Snoop Dogg and is a founding member of Kneebody. Here he expands his purview by interaction with Patricia Brennan (vibraphone, EFX), Simon Moullier (vibraphone, chromatic balafon, EFX), Joel Ross (vibraphone, marimba) and Juan Diego Villalobos (vibraphone, electric marimba, percussion, EFX). All bandleaders in their own right, Brennan has also recorded with Alan Braufman; Moullier with Terri Lyne Carrington; Ross with Makaya McCraven; and Villalobos with the Caracas Trio.

Hovering in the background, EFX oscillations add rippling textures to the six tracks. More crucially, the restrained hollow gourd-like resonations sometimes projected from the marimba and balafon, moderate the electric instruments' harshness and intensify the balladic consistency of the tunes. Reflecting the

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RAMON LOPEZ

With the ten pieces, Lopez cuts loose with evident technical skill, savvy restraint and unbridled glee...All in all, 40 Springs in Paris is a worthy object listen of exploratory, even intimate, solo-drum work.

– Daniel A. Brown (*The New York City Jazz Record*)

40 SPRINGS IN PARIS

Ramon Lopez is one of the most respected European artists in contemporary jazz, having recorded over 150 albums and participated in concerts and festivals all over the world with some of the most influential and innovative representatives of the jazz world, including Mark Feldman, Satoko Fujii, Barry Guy and Joachim Kühn.

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