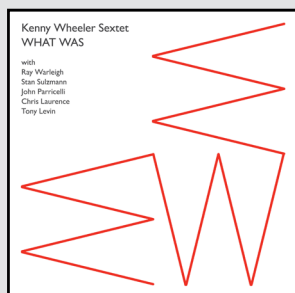


UNEARTHED GEM



What Was
Kenny Wheeler Sextet (False Walls)
by Fred Bouchard

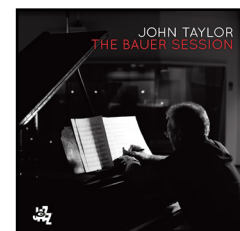
Limpid lines of exquisite purity and gentle sadness, bristling with passionate melodicism, are suddenly punctuated with squibs and squeals, then balanced with broad, calming subtones—few trumpeters and flugelhorn players are as instantly recognizable as Kenny Wheeler, who passed away a dozen years ago this month at age 84. The shy Torontonian made his early (but permanent) jump to London's cautiously exploratory mainstream, where he deftly carved welcome niches in the bands of John Dankworth, Tubby Hayes and Ronnie Scott. Wheeler collaborated equably with rockers (The Animals' Eric Burdon) and avant-gardists Anthony Braxton, Globe Unity Orchestra and Evan Parker, who is the producer here for False Walls, a Chicago-UK boutique label. Wheeler often ran his own ensembles, large and

small, playing his iconic melodies, with resonant favorites (check ECM and CAM Jazz) including *Gnu High* (1975), *Kayak* (1992), *Angel Song* (1996) and *What Now?* (2004).

On *What Was*, a 1995 archival studio session released here in full for the first time, the ostensible leader readily shares the limelight with long-standing bandmates Ray Warleigh (alto, flute), Stan Sulzmann (tenor), John Parricelli (guitar), Chris Laurence (bass) and Tony Levin (drums). "Blue Nile" takes Wayne Shorter's exotic "Footprints" bassline at a camel walk, its motilic, ever-alert, bass and drum backfield muscling support. "You've Read the Book", a ballad led by cocky flute, lets Wheeler tell his own sad-but-true tale. Oddly structured, "Masbro" features a tenor saxophone/drum duo and the leader's energized but wistful solo. The gently lilting flugelhorn leads on "Footloose" lets Wheeler air his lofty views with typical modesty. On the title track, heraldic in intent as a Booker Little-type flagwaver, Wheeler and Levin duel over 8-4-2s, leading—surprise—to a variant on "Sub-Conscious Lee", likely a transcribed Lee Konitz chorus. Clever by half! "Kind Folk", a eulogistic ode, well-suited to the phlegmatic Wheeler temperament, opens with watery guitar and mild flute, as horns sit *shiva*.

What Was offers a fine late chapter of Wheeler memorabilia in a starkly elegant package.

For more info visit falsewalls.co.uk/release/what-was



Tramonto (ECM)
The Bauer Session (CAM Jazz)
John Taylor
by Ken Dryden

The English pianist John Taylor (1942-2015), who would have turned 84 this month, was widely known in his homeland and in Europe as a bandleader and collaborator with his former wife, Norma Winstone, as well as John Surman, Mike Westbrook and Kenny Wheeler. His distinctive sound, brilliant improvising and creative compositions make it worth exploring his extensive discography.

Tramonto is the first-time release of Taylor's 2002 trio concert in Birmingham, UK, with two veteran Americans—Marc Johnson (bass) and Joey Baron (drums). Given the greats that both have played with in trios, here they once again prove themselves to be interactive musicians, rather than serving as simple accompanists. The pianist's "Pure and Simple" is anything but, at times it's a whirlwind of jagged lines, dazzling runs and intricate interplay, which is a specialty of the leader's rhythm section partners. Taylor's humorous touch is central to the trio's rendition of Steve Swallow's "Up Too Late", which is marked by frenetic runs and a bit of dissonance. Johnson is prominent on a reading of Ralph Towner's title track ("Tramonto" is Italian for sunset), as the

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