

Forrest Dylan Bryant

RANDI DISTERHEFT

but (Superfran)



This young Canadian bassist's first recording as a leader boasts a strong sense of identity and a surprisingly varied compositional range. Spinning exuberant hard-bop tunes alongside serious modernism, she channels a Mingus vibe for one track and flirts with free jazz on another. The band sounds a bit reserved at times, but overall the disc is catchy and enjoyable, combining a solid understanding of tradition with a fresh spirit of adventure. The two vocal tracks are a nice surprise, matching Disterheft's quirky lyrics with Sophia Perlman's throaty delivery.

RED HESS BAND

the Grotto (Allison)



Abundant energy and a free-wheeling attitude make this inside/outside session a delightful ride. Hess, a tenor saxophonist based in Denver, leads a strong, pianoless quintet through complex, carefully drawn labyrinths, with many touch points to the 1960s and frequent excursions toward free jazz. Bassist Ken Filiano's oblique solos and Matt Wilson's shape-shifting drum work command attention on nearly every track, while Hess and fellow sax player Gunther spar gleefully above them. And Miles ices the cake with his easygoing, gaging touch on trumpet.

RYAN KEBERLE DOUBLE QUARTET

an Keberle Double Quartet (Alternate Side)



Warm and breezy, trombonist Ryan Keberle's debut release expands the standard quartet with four additional brass pieces, a configuration balancing the rich sense of a large ensemble with the nimble agility of a small band. The disc is upbeat from start to finish, as easygoing originals alternate with crisp, well-mannered arrangements. Standout tunes by the Beades, Wayne Shorter and Adam Mehldau. Neatly layered horn passages abound throughout the disc, which is also distinguished by Keberle's ever-cheerful solos.

DON LERMAN

the Zoot Side of Life (New Charts)



Taking their cue largely from the Al Cohn-Zoot Sims partnership of yesteryear, tenor saxophonists Don Lerman and Scott Silbert

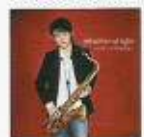


Alex Skolnick Trio

embark on a lightly swinging cruise through classic cool-jazz territory. The pair has highly sympathetic styles, with Lerman charting a straight-ahead course that Silbert nudges into a slightly earthier angle. The program is quite pleasant, sticking to a straight-and-narrow path that might fit in very nicely at a social function, but little depth is evident beneath its pretty surface.

ROBERT MACGREGOR

Refraction of Light (Black Tri)



Robert MacGregor's debut recording is both intellectual and congenial, full of melodic ambiguities but possessing an easy swing and relaxed interplay among his quartet. MacGregor's tenor saxophone sound is light, lyrical and deliberate, as he seems always to be musing over private puzzles. Pianist Miro Sprague prods at the leader's carefully balanced frameworks, while bassist Perry Wortman and drummer Will Clark provide agile accompaniment. Among several engaging tracks, the enchantingly subtle ballad "Zizhuyuan in the Summer" and quietly skipping "Senbo's Dreamwalk" are highlights.

FERENC NEMETH SEXTET

Night Songs (Dreamers Collective)



A strain of melancholy longing runs through drummer Ferenc Nemeth's dreamlike debut as a leader, as delicately layered melodies billow and merge in overlapping waves. Nemeth's rolling cadences provide direction, while the twin saxophones of Chris Cheek and Mark Turner dance in an intimate *pas de deux* or roam introspective byways. Aaron Parks is sunny yet mysterious on piano, and guitarist Lionel Loueke's sparkling, ethereal lines and quiet vocalizing add a sense of fantasy to this elusively structured set.

MIKE REED'S LOOSE ASSEMBLY

Last Year's Ghost (482)



Much of the material on this album by Chicago drummer Mike Reed was born in free-improvisation sessions, and the resulting tracks retain a spur-of-the-moment feeling despite their later expansion into full-fledged compositions. A unique quintet lineup with alto sax, vibes, cello and bass wraps a dark, velvety texture