

Review from etnobofofin

Category: Music



Once, a well-known New Zealand jazz drummer (OK, well-known in NZ, anyway) was known to say "Bebop's the only music, man.". The naïvety of this generalisation does not detract from his reputation as a drummer, but his apparent unwillingness to engage seriously with any music made after 1955 might mean he may never encounter some really good examples of the the small group jazz being made today, including the compositions of Paul Nash.

Many of us on the wrong side of the Atlantic (or outside NY) have never heard of Bronx-born composer and guitarist Paul Nash. A graduate of Berklee in 1972, he worked mainly in the States up until his early death from a brain tumour in January 2005.

Jazz Cycles (along with Avant Noir) is one of two albums of his music recorded in the last year of his life. But far from a sad or wistful, Jazz Cycles is a disc full of optimism and great ideas, one I'm really enjoying listening to at the moment.

Some of the compositions here recall the great small group writing heard on Wayne Shorter's Blue Note dates in the early 60s - swinging, well bluesy, but ever-so-slightly angular. Certainly the Jazz Messengers could've picked up It's Only a Dream without blinking - although the Blakey/Workman/Timmons rhythm section of that period would have propelled the piece in a different direction.

The playing here is pretty fine. Another highlight is the improvised polyphony in the solo section of Strange Rife, where Endsley, Williamson, Ries and Juris get to splay their chops Mingus-like all over the slack-jawed groove. Or Bruce Williamson's opening birdsong on Wind over the Lake. Vic Juris gets top marks from me - I'm not easily moved by jazz guitarists, but his work on this record is awesome.

Proceeds from the sale of Jazz Cycles go to the Paul Nash Memorial Fund at the Manhattan New Music Project to continue the promotion of Paul Nash's work.

August 8th, 2007 by Richard

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