

Pete McCann *Range*

WHIRLWIND 4675

★★★★½

A remarkable post-Pat Metheny contemporary jazz guitarist, Pete McCann has flown somewhat under the radar since the '90s, though the quality of his playing and depth of his writing ranks alongside his generational colleagues Ben Monder and Kurt Rosenwinkel. He stakes out highly original territory on his fifth outing as a leader in the company of pianist-keyboardist Henry Hey, alto saxophonist John O'Gallagher, bassist Matt Clohesy and drummer Mark Ferber.

McCann has such command of his instru-

ment that he can go deep in any setting, whether it's the bristling, harmonically challenging opener "Kenny" (his ode to the late trumpeter/flugelhornist Kenny Wheeler), the angular, odd-metered "Seventh Jar," the urgently swinging "Realm" (dedicated to pianist Richie Beirach), the Frisellian heartland ballad "To The Mountains" or the pedal-to-the-metal fusion anthem "Mustard." There's even a 12-tone-influenced piece in the darkly dissonant "Numinous."

Hey is the invaluable utility infielder here, acquitting himself brilliantly on acoustic piano ("Kenny," "Realm," "Seventh Jar"), Fender Rhodes electric piano ("Dyad Changes," "Rumble," "Bridge Scandal") and organ ("Mustard"). Saxophonist O'Gallagher, who plays cascading unison lines alongside McCann on several of the intricate heads here, also delivers outstanding solos on the uptempo swingers "Dyad Changes" and "Realm" and on the raucous "Bridge Scandal." It's a formidable, flexible outfit with a built-in chemistry and an audacious streak.

—Bill Milkowski

Range: Kenny; Seventh Jar; Realm; To The Mountains; Mustard; Dyad Changes; Numinous; Bridge Scandal; Rumble; Mine Is Yours. (62:05)

Personnel: Pete McCann, guitar; John O'Gallagher, alto saxophone; Henry Hey, piano (1–3); Rhodes (6, 8, 9); organ (5); Matt Clohesy, bass; Mark Ferber, drums.

Ordering info: whirlwindrecordings.com

Nicole Mitchell/Tomeka Reid/Mike Reed

Artifacts

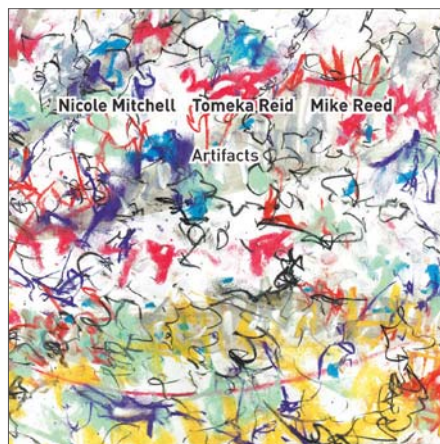
482 MUSIC 1093

★★★★

The title of this album suggests a collection of found objects, or perhaps the products of some archeological dig. But while there is definitely some old gold among its nine tunes, which were selected from throughout the history of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), it comes across as more of a cross-generational conversation than a presentation of relics.

For a start, there's the band. Flutist and former AACM president Nicole Mitchell joined the organization in 1995; drummer Mike Reed and cellist Tomeka Reid, who have also held administrative posts, are post-millennial members. They've played in each other's bands for years and have established a foundation for the trust and empathy evident in their playing. But it's new for them to play together as a collective.

At the same time, there's another conversation going on. This one's between the identities of the band members and the imposing material drawn from the songbooks of Anthony Braxton, Air, Leroy Jenkins and Roscoe Mitchell, among others. The material



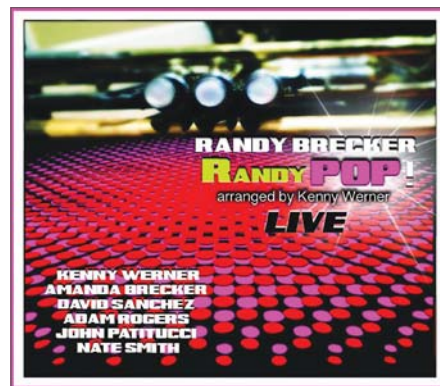
ranges from the haunting solemnity of Amina Claudine Myers' "Have Mercy Upon Us" to the Iberian-tinged vivacity of Steve McCall's "B.K.," but within that broad range, there's still a strong bias toward assertive melody. The performances are pithy and lucid, which makes for satisfying listening, and also makes the record accessible enough to be a good introduction to the avant-garde.

—Bill Meyer

Artifacts: Composition 23B; Jo Jar; Bernice/Days Fly By With Ruby; The Clowns; Have Mercy On Us; B.K.; I'll Be Right There Waiting; Munkt Munkt; Light On The Path. (46:17)

Personnel: Nicole Mitchell, flutes, electronics; Tomeka Reid, cello; Mike Reed, drums.

Ordering info: 482music.com



Randy Brecker

RandyPOP!

PILOO RECORDS 009

★★★★½

With his younger brother Michael, trumpeter Randy Brecker helped define the sound of early jazz-rock in outfits like Dreams and the Brecker Brothers Band while also accruing an impressive "straight" jazz resume with everyone from Horace Silver and Art Blakey to Charles Mingus.

Here he reprises some of the work from the scores of pop sessions he played through the '70s and '80s. It's a good showcase of Brecker's range, but what's even more impressive is how this septet can stretch out, making the most of their jazz chops while being true to the original spirit of these pop hits.

The astute arrangements by keyboardist Kenny Werner are central to the project, so the band lavishes appropriate attention on the beautifully structured melody of the ballad "Hello It's Me," by Brecker's fellow Philadelphian (and early collaborator) Todd Rundgren, leaving plenty of solo room for the trumpeter and Werner's piano. On the other hand, a piece like "New Frontier," by Steely Dan songwriter Donald Fagen (from Fagen's solo album *The Nightfly*) offers up its idiosyncratic details as food for new harmonic and melodic thought.

Brecker's song introductions on this club date (at New York's Blue Note) are informative and charming, but might have been better left to the liner notes—they're the only thing about the disc that might get tired after a few listens.

—Jon Garelick

RandyPOP! New Frontier; Let Me Just Follow Behind; I Can't Quit Her; Hello It's Me; Ghost Writer; Think; I've Got a Bag of My Own; Meeting Across the River; Late in the Evening. (77:45)

Personnel: Randy Brecker, trumpet; Kenny Werner, piano, keyboards, arrangements; David Sánchez, tenor saxophone; Amanda Brecker, vocals; Adam Rogers, guitar; John Patitucci, bass; Nate Smith, drums.

Ordering info: piloorecords.com