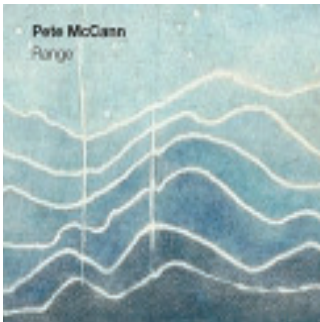


Bird is the Worm

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Recommended: Pete McCann – “Range”



[Pete McCann](#)'s newest album starts out well enough. Opening track “Kenny” leads out with a pleasant melody before the quintet politely takes turns surrounding it with solos that ring with a professional by-the-numbers precision. “Seventh Jar” has a nice solo from pianist **Henry Hey** that seems to stretch the cadence by sheer force of will. “Realm” shows McCann can run wind sprints on electric guitar and speak lyrically in the same breath. “To the Mountains” generates some interest with its drifting melodic ambience and a tempo that is content to be its mirror.

All in all, the recording's first half makes a good account of itself and for those who enjoy a good modern jazz guitar session, *Range* won't make anyone sorely disappointed for scooping it up. But it also doesn't do much to separate itself from the crowd, and it never really presents a sense of danger or risk.

But then the quintet comes out for the second half like a fire was lit under their instruments, and suddenly everything changes.

They make their pronouncement of change with “Mustard” and the way Hey's organ just takes off and soars while McCann's electric guitar shoots streaks of fire across the sky. The lovely ballad “Numinous” sees McCann switching to acoustic guitar, and the song harkens back to a previous track, “To the Mountains” and its drifting ambience. But on “Numinous,” the quintet show no inhibition to scarring the

surface of the serenity and forming a few cracks... a bit of atonality, some detached rhythmic patterns... that provide the song some personality to go along with its gorgeous exterior.

“Bridge Scandal” is all about sax and guitar seeing who can generate the most heat, while pianist Hey, bassist **Matt Clohesy** and drummer **Mark Ferber** give it shape and form. Everyone makes a mess of everything, then pulls it all together and starts in on the next, fun mess.

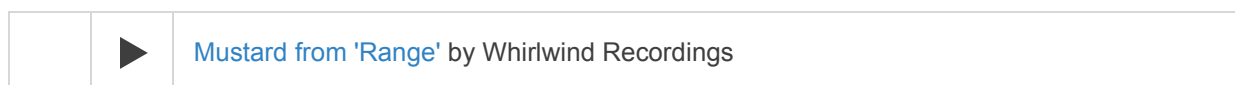
And even those tracks that chart a course that more closely mimes the straight-ahead tunes from the album’s first half have more personality on the album’s latter half. “Dyad Changes” and “Rumble “ have a greater expressiveness, whether be it the flourishes of Fender Rhodes or the punches in bunches delivered by saxophonist **John O’Gallagher**... the activity level is higher and there’s an ever-present sense that things could fly apart without warning.

The album ends with the enchanting “Mine is Yours.” McCann switches to acoustic guitar for this one, and the sound he makes is like falling rain. Complementing McCann on storm, O’Gallagher adds some flashes of lightning on sax, Ferber with gentle cymbal crashes the thunder, Clohesy’s bass is the splashing of puddles and Hey’s piano contribution is the promise of sunlight when the storm is over.

Even better than that element of surprise from the switch in demeanor on the album’s two halves is the anticipation of starting the album over again from the top. Just as the opening songs to a recording can affect the reception of subsequent tracks, so too can the closing tracks affect the excitement of hitting the play button again. Suddenly, those perfectly acceptable opening tracks are more than the stuff of just-another-jazz-guitar-recording... now they’re the lead-up to liftoff, when the musicians let loose, and technical precision transforms into a wild energy unleashed.

It’s a cool effect switching from cerebral, passive engagement to supercharged emotional connectivity. It’s also a refreshing tactic to play one half off the other, leading, initially, to a fun bit of compare & contrast, but then, with time, the album’s components resulting in a greater appreciation for their opposite.

Your album personnel: **Pete McCann** (electric & acoustic guitars), **John O’Gallagher** (alto sax), **Henry Hey** (piano, Rhodes and organ), **Matt Clohesy** (acoustic & electric bass) and **Mark Ferber** (drums).



Released on [Whirlwind Recordings](#).

Jazz from NYC.

Available at: [Amazon](#)



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