

Heritage/Evolution Vol 2
PRISM Quartet featuring
Ravi Coltrane, Joe Lovano
and Chris Potter
XAS Records

The PRISM Quartet is one of the most prominent saxophone quartets of our time, with a vast recorded output as well as a packed touring schedule; a glance at their website reveals that *Heritage/*

Evolution Vol 2 is the quartet's seventh release since 2020! This album follows on from PRISM Quartet's original *Heritage/Evolution* album of 2015, which saw the group collaborating with jazz greats including Dave Liebman, Greg Osby and Steve Lehman. On *Heritage/Evolution Vol 2* the ensemble is joined by leading saxophonists Ravi Coltrane, Joe Lovano and Chris Potter. In the words of Matthew Levy, PRISM's tenor saxophonist: 'Every musical instrument tells many stories. In *Heritage/Evolution*, the saxophone takes centre stage; its fascinating dual history in classical music and jazz leads PRISM and our guest artists through a collaborative process of discovery.'

The disc opens with *Forbidden Drive* by Matthew Levy, which depicts a musical journey along Philadelphia's Wissahickon Creek and features Joe Lovano on tenor alongside the PRISM Quartet. Lovano produces some beautiful melodic lines and is supported by rich atmospheric textures from the quartet. It is an interesting collision of styles, with the quartet sometimes sounding a little square in comparison to Lovano. However, Taimur Sullivan on baritone does a stalwart job of bridging the gap, managing to blend seamlessly with both Lovano and his fellow quartet members.

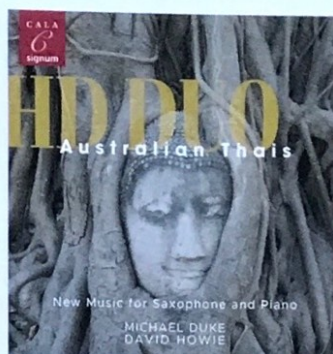
The standout work of the album is Chris Potter's *Improvisations*, a series of works built around Potter's improvisations that he subsequently scored for the quartet alongside Ravi Coltrane and Potter himself. These pieces feature interesting harmonies and rhythmic motifs, and some of the counterpoint is even reminiscent of Bach at times. In the 'Interludes' between the 'Improvisations', Potter and Coltrane really let loose with some incredible playing, clearly enjoying trading ideas. Throughout this work Sullivan, on baritone again, does an incredible job of bridging the sound worlds of PRISM and of Potter and Coltrane, giving a cohesion to the group as the different styles merge.

Joe Lovano's *Super Sonix* opens with Lovano improvising on saxophone and percussion instruments simultaneously, creating some intriguing textures and ideas. There are strong influences of free jazz in this work, and Lovano credits Gunther Schuller and Ornette Coleman as inspirations. Some of the movements are a little hard to latch onto at a first listening, but there is much to discover in this work, and at times it does settle into a groove, particularly when Lovano switches to drums for 'Hipsters and Flipsters'.

The final track, Ravi Coltrane's *Tones for M*, sees the PRISM Quartet augmented by Coltrane on soprano saxophone and Chris Potter on bass clarinet. Coltrane handles the soprano with ease, allowing it to soar gracefully with no hint of the difficulties often associated with the instrument. He is superbly supported by Potter on bass clarinet, at times reaching up into the highest registers of the instrument.

Overall, there is much to enjoy on this album for both classical and jazz fans alike. The most satisfying collaboration is that between Potter, Coltrane and PRISM, especially in Potter's *Improvisations*, where the writing allows the two tenor soloists to blow freely while being superbly supported by the quartet.

Alastair Penman



AUSTRALIAN THAIS
HD Duo – David Howie
(piano), Michael Duke
(saxophone)
Cala Signum

Australian duo David Howie (piano) and Michael Duke (saxophone) are known as champions of new chamber music, and

Australian Thais sees them take inspiration from Howie's Thai family connections to create a fascinating disc of almost entirely new works by composers from both countries.

The first three works are by the Australian composers. The opening piece, *Hurly Burly* by Matthew Orlovich, is a three-movement work that shows the duo's ensemble prowess in the outer movements, with lithe, rhythmic playing from both Duke and Howie. The middle movement, 'Reverberant', is much more atmospheric, playing with spacious, echoing material before a lyrical conclusion.

Gerard Brophy's *Dervish* was composed as a tribute to Senegalese master drummer Doudou N'Diaye Rose, and alternates plaintive moments with highly rhythmic, syncopated writing that leads into a breathless finale.

A contrast comes with *Water Has No Equal*, by Tim Dargaville. Duke opens on soprano sax, with flurries of semiquavers and bell-like high notes left ringing evocatively on the piano strings. Howie then enters with sleek arpeggios, leading to a wonderfully languid passage of music which builds back to the more urgent material of the opening before finally subsiding once again.

Narongrit Dhamabutra's *Three Spirits of ASEAN* evokes a rich and vivid musical landscape across its three movements. 'The Chant of Rattanatri' paints a picture of temple bells and peaceful Buddhist chanting, with the former conveyed by atmospheric, dissonant, ringing piano chords, and the latter by a sombre alto sax. 'Gala' sees further exquisite piano writing, while the sax becomes more energetic, with fluttering effects and bold, declamatory phrases. 'Kakula' has more rhythmic drive and a fizzing energy, with both players managing some serious technical demands impressively.

Serenity Flux, by Saksri Pang Vongtaradon, is also highly colourful, with Howie supplying remarkable sounds from the piano strings as well as percussive effects, and a kaleidoscope of timbres and effects from Duke, now on tenor sax. It is an absorbing sound world, but one that perhaps doesn't quite sustain its initial impact across the 11 minutes of the piece.

Denny Euprasert's *Isaan* concludes the disc, with two passages of wistful melodic writing and introspective harmony surrounding a sprightly, minimalism-inspired middle section, all executed with polish and aplomb by both players.

Overall, *Australian Thais* showcases a very impressive set of new duo repertoire, with Howie and Duke's interplay and musicianship engaging throughout.

Guy Passey