

Bill Frisell & Thomas Morgan - Epistrophy (2019)

Written by bluesever

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1 All In Fun 8:36 2 Wildwood Flower / Save The Last Dance For Me (9:34) 3 Mumbo Jumbo 8:08 4 You Only Live Twice 8:10 5 Lush Life 4:38 6 Epistrophy 7:27 7 Pannonica 7:03 8 Red River Valley 8:09 9 In The Wee Small Hours Of The Morning 6:55 Double Bass – Thomas Morgan Guitar – Bill Frisell

Guitarist Bill Frisell and double bassist Thomas Morgan first appeared as a duo on 2017's *Small Town*. Recorded in 2016 at the Village Vanguard, it offered conversations in jazz, folk, R&B, and pop with an intimacy and improvisational elocution seldom matched in recordings cut with a live audience. *Epistrophy* was culled from the same Vanguard run proving the earlier recording no fluke. Like its predecessor, this nine-song set is comprised of jazz standards, folk and pop songs, show tunes, movie themes, and a Paul Motian original. (Both men played with him.)

If anything, the choice of material here is cannier than *Small Town*'s, opening with "All in Fun" from the 1939 musical *Very Warm for May*. The loose, relaxed intro showcases the guitarist's abundant gift for lyricism and inventive rhythmic notions. The bassist answers and embellishes with a gentle swing before the tune becomes a more open-ended improvisational device. The Carter Family's "Wildwood Flower" also appeared on *Small Town*, but here it's part of a melody that concludes with a heartbreakingly beautiful reading of Doc Pomus & Mort Shuman's Drifters' classic "Save the Last Dance for Me." The interplay on the latter, with its in-the-moment harmonic and rhythmic exchanges, is truly remarkable. They resurrect Motian's lovely yet slightly angular "Mumbo Jumbo" with Frisell extrapolating on the melody and chord voicings that open onto Morgan's suggestions via harmonic counterpoint in the knottier passages. Where the earlier album boasted John Barry's theme from *Goldfinger*, "You Only Live Twice" appears here, with Frisell articulating some of his loveliest rubato playing, languidly quoting from Ferrante & Teicher's *Midnight Cowboy* theme. Morgan responds to the guitarist's lines in tango rhythms. Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life" is revealed in all of its Debussy-ian glory and stands in sharp -- but wonderful -- contrast to the approach on the two Thelonious Monk tunes in the title track and "Pannonica," where angles, knots, and subtle humor are offered as holistic harmonic

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devices. These tunes, with their good-natured inquisitiveness and mischief, are both set highlights. "Red River Valley" (Frisell first cut it with Gary Peacock on 1994's Just So Happens) is sprightly, swinging, and full of subtle grooves in its lyrical articulation, before the closer: a read of the standard "In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning" that echoes Frank Sinatra's immortal vocal reading from the mid-'50s. Its economical approach whispers with bittersweet tenderness and delivers gorgeous soloing from Morgan and Frisell. Epistrophy is a companion to Small Town, but it is also an extension of the intimate, communicative union shared by this duo in near symbiosis. Together they create a gold standard for live performance. --- Thom Jurek, AllMusic Review

Podobnie jak „Small Town” - wydanie dla ECM z 2017 roku, które The Guardian określił jako „hipnotyzujący, pomysłowy i nawiedzony”- album „Epistrophy” gitarzysty Billa Frisella i basisty Thomasa Morgana powstał na podstawie serii koncertów duetu z marca 2016 roku w Village Vanguard w Nowym Jorku. Na Albumie znajdują się poetyckie wersje utworów duetu z albumu „Americana” („All in Fun”, „Red River Valley”, „Save the Last Dance for Me”), jak również nowa wersja kompozycji Paula Motiana („Mumbo Jumbo”), którego zarówno gitarzysta, jak i basista dobrze znali.

Frisell i Morgan doskonale uchwycili esencję „Lush Life” Billy'ego Strayhorna i „In The Wee Small Hours of the Morning” Franka Sinatry. W centrum albumu znajdują się dwie kompozycje Theloniousa Monka: funkowa „Epistrophy” i spokojna ballada „Pannonica”. Podobnie jak w przypadku „Goldfinger” na „Small Town”, Frisell i Morgan wykonali własną interpretację tytułowej kompozycji Johna Barry'ego z filmu o Jamesie Bondzie – „You Only Live Twice”.
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