Enrico Pieranunzi – Fellini Jazz (2003)

01. I Vitelloni; play 02. Il Bidone, 03. Il Bidone; 04. La Città Delle Donne; 05. Amarcord; 06. Cabiria's Dream; 07. La Dolce Vita; 08. La Dolce Vita; 09. La Strada; 10. Le Notti Di Cabiria; 11. Fellini's Waltz. play Personnel: Kenny Wheeler - Trumpet, Flugelhorn; Chris Potter - Tenor Saxophone, Soprano Saxophone; Enrico Pieranunzi - Piano; Charlie Haden - Bass; Paul Motian - Drums.

The elegance that is Fellini Jazz serves as a tribute to both the great director and this assembly of musicians.

Italian pianist Enrico Pieranunzi continues to make make dream recordings that are so much more than all-star get togethers. This release follows two stellar sessions, Plays Morricone and Current Conditions (both on CAM Jazz), with bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Joey Baron.

Think of Fellini and the name that follows is Nino Rota, who composed music for the director's films and also Coppola's Godfather series. Rota draws inspiration from all music to form his unique brand of folk music. This band measures out the composer's vision in satisfying portions.

Besides the pianist, the attention-grabbing performances come from trumpeter Kenny Wheeler and saxophonist Chris Potter. Potter a mainstay in Dave Holland's band, has full command of his horn at the tender age of 31. He tends toward a gentle but large voice, for example covering the ballad "Il Bidone" like fresh syrup over warm pancakes. The two versions of that particular track are done in the form of a ballad and a post-bop workout. Wheeler's flugelhorn complements Potter with remarkable telepathy. His muted trumpet fills the tango of "La Città Delle Donne" as well as the railroad-patterned version of "La Dolce Vita."

Pieranunzi finds it almost second nature to be partnered with drummer Paul Motian and bassist Charlie Haden. Motian, who played with Bill Evans, keeps that open, loose rhythm swirling behind Pieranunzi's Evans-like clean vision. Haden and the pianist close the record with a sentimental duo of a Pieranunzi bitter/sweet original that could be the end piece to a "love found/love lost" movie.

The band keeps the music in the forefront here. They play the circus theme version of "La Dolce Vita" with a straight-face, Pieranunzi ringing in the track by comping around Potter's soprano flight. The favorite always is the composition "Amarcord." Played as a blues, it reveals Fellini's bittersweet cinematic themes.

This is a sensational recording, worthy of its subject matter and its superb cast. ---Mark Corotto, allaboutjazz.com

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