

Jeff 'Tain' Watts - Megawatts (1991/2016)

Written by bluesever

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1 - *Black Nile* 2 - *Alycia* 3 - *The Impaler* 4 - *Rainbow* 5 - *Kasploosh* 6 - *You And The Night And The Music* 7 - *Dance Of The Niblets* 8 - *Opal Rose* 9 - *Blooski* Kenny Kirkland - piano
Charles Fambrough - bass Jeff "Tain" Watts - drums

The reissue of this 1991 session -- Jeff "Tain" Watts' debut as a leader -- in 2004 suggested that the age of the neo-bopping "Young Lions" had already passed into history, and some of its artifacts were coming due for historical reappraisal. The mundane side of the story is that this release couldn't get properly distributed under this name in 1991 due to contractual conflicts, and went out under the title *Thunder and Rainbows* by the so-called band *Jazz from Keystone*. In any case, this disc's return on the omnivorous *Sunnyside* label is a welcome event -- mostly because of the strong playing by a trio of former *Wynton*-ites but also because it serves as a memorial for the late pianist *Kenny Kirkland*, who died in 1998. Predictably, for a piano trio session under a drummer's name, *Kirkland* dominates the session, whether flashing his considerable post-bop chops or displaying a *Keith Jarrett*-like lyrical bent in *Jarrett's* own "*Rainbow*." As a straight-ahead and highly musical if stylistically derivative pianist left mostly to his own devices, *Kirkland* is very impressive; indeed, this CD is one of the best examples of his work. But *Watts* and bassist *Charles Fambrough* are not left in the dust; with *Kirkland*, they continue the formidable team spirit and intense interplay that they developed in the *Wynton Marsalis Quintet* of the early '80s. They mix it up particularly well in a favorite *Watts* potboiler from the period, "*The Impaler*," as well as in the cha cha-driven groove of *Fambrough's* "*Opal Rose*," and they give *Wayne Shorter's* "*Black Nile*" a skilled post-bop ride. Only one *Tin Pan Alley* standard here, "*You and the Night and the Music*," which the threesome polishes off in a fleet straight-ahead rush. This session has truly transcended its time -- and there are new liner notes containing often valuable recollections by *Watts* and *Fambrough*. ---*Richard S. Ginell*, *AllMusic Review*

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The trio of Jeff Watts, Kenny Kirkland and Charles Fambrough first united as the rhythm section of that first great Wynton Marsalis Quintet and played together for more than two years in the group that set jazz on its ears with its further exploration of the musical concepts that were born of the Miles Davis Quintet with Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Tony Williams. Following the (overly) well-publicized rift that resulted in the disbanding of the Marsalis quintet when Kirkland left with Branford to tour with Sting, Tain was reunited with the pianist in Branford's new band and the two remained almost constant rhythm section mates for the duration of his life. It was Fambrough, who had previously left Wynton's band to lead his own groups, that organized this date to feature on its own the unit that had propelled Marsalis to stardom. ---sunnysidezone.com

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