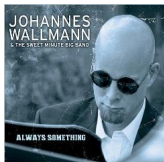


Johannes Wallmann & The Sweet Minute Big Band - Always Something (2015)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 30 July 2015 15:45 -

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1. *Always Something* (6:50) 2. *Theme From* (10:23) 3. *I Fall In Love Too Easily* (5:10) 4. *My Favorite Things* (7:07) 5. *The Sweet Minute* (7:34) 6. *Sky Dance* (9:41) 7. *The Loyal Opposition* (8:27) 8. *Your Silence Will Not Protect You* (7:52) Ben Knox, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone Eric Koppa, alto saxophone, flute Tony Barba, tenor saxophone, clarinet Tom Gullion, tenor saxophone Les Thimmig, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet, clarinet David Cooper, trumpet Jamie Breiwick, trumpet Eric Jacobson, trumpet Russ Johnson, trumpet Darren Sterud, trombone Jamie Kember, trombone Don Deal, trombone Mike Dugan, bass trombone Johannes Wallmann, piano, composer Nick Moran, bass Dave Bayles, drums

In twelve years in New York City, and five years in Oakland, California, the now Wisconsin-based pianist and composer JOHANNES WALLMANN has established himself as a skilled and creative composer of complex yet highly engaging music. Wallmann has recorded five albums as a leader, including the 2015 quintet album *The Town Musicians* on the Fresh Sound New Talent label that features trumpeter Russ Johnson, rising guitar star Gilad Hekselman, and Wallmann's long-time New York collaborators Sean Conly, bass, and Jeff Hirshfield, drums (saxophonist Dayna Stephens also appears on two tracks). Along the way, the German-born, Vancouver Island-raised pianist has also recorded or performed with trumpeters Ingrid Jensen and Ralph Alessi; saxophonists Gary Bartz, Seamus Blake, Dennis Mitcheltree, Pete Yellin and Phil Dwyer; trombonist Josh Roseman; jazz tubaists Howard Johnson and Marcus Rojas; bassists Jeff Andrews and Martin Wind; drummers Danny Gottlieb, Tim Horner, Terry Clarke and Donald Bailey; the Harlem Spiritual Ensemble; and Canto-pop star Faye Wong. A veteran musician and educator, Dr. Wallmann (B.M., Berklee College of Music, M.A. & Ph.D., New York University) has taught at New York University and at the New School for Jazz & Contemporary Music, and served as Director of Jazz Studies at California State University-East Bay from 2007 to 2012. In 2012, Wallmann became the inaugural holder of the John and Carolyn Peterson Chair in Jazz Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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His new album, *Always Something*, features his big band writing, performed by a cast of top-flight jazz improvisers from Madison and Milwaukee. The compositions on *Always Something* range from the up-tempo Brecker-esque title track to the Afro-Cuban infused tone poem "Theme From," to the New Orleans second-line groove of "The Sweet Minute," to the melancholy ballad "Your Silence Will Not Protect You" (inspired by poet Audre Lorde), to the high-octane contrapuntal soprano and tenor saxophone duet "The Loyal Opposition." Wallmann pays homage to the modern big band tradition on a new arrangement of his composition "Sky Dance" (recorded with a quartet on his 2001 album *Alphabeticity*). Rounding out this album of mostly original compositions are Wallmann's harmonically fresh take on "My Favorite Things" that references as much Coltrane as *The Sound of Music*, as well as a rich orchestration of Jule Styne's ballad "I Fall In Love Too Easily." The compositions on *Always Something* cover much ground, but the album maintains stylistic unity through the band's emphasis on groove and Wallmann's sophisticated harmonic language. Throughout the album, Wallmann displays the assured hand of a veteran composer: there are plenty of pretty, sweet, or melancholy melodies, but Wallmann knows just when to introduce musical grit and adventure to surprise his audience and create a highly engaging jazz experience.

Wallmann composed and arranged the music on *Always Something* to showcase the unique voices of the musicians in his band. The solos are extended features for the expert improvisers that comprise each instrument section. Everybody gets a turn, and the musicians prove that Wisconsin's creative music scene is thriving. Milwaukee / New York City trumpeter Russ Johnson is known to international audiences for bridging contemporary and free jazz styles in a wide range of touring and recording ensembles, but fellow trumpeters Jamie Breiwick and Eric Jacobsen (who together with Johnson represent three different generations of the graduates from the same Milwaukee middle and high school) and lead trumpeter Dave Cooper have also received national recognition with their own musical projects, and each brings a very accomplished and highly personal voice to their respective solo features. Saxophonists Tony Barba of the Youngblood Brass Band, fusion-inspired tenor Tom Gullion, and big band veteran multi-instrumentalist Les Thimmig represent three different generations of the saxophone in jazz, yet blend beautiful with their saxophone colleagues to form a rich section sound. Lead trombonist Darren Sterud, another young brass band veteran and a frequent collaborator with a variety of New Orleans-based artists summons the sounds of Frenchman Street on the trombones' collective improv on "The Sweet Minute," and bassist-and-drummer tandem Nick Moran and Dave Bayles always keep the compositions' groove front and center. ---cdbaby.com

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