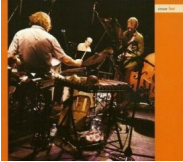


Medeski Martin And Wood – The Stone-Issue Four (2010)

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 20 February 2011 19:49 - Last Updated Tuesday, 03 February 2015 17:37

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01 – Tutrasai

02 – Riffin ed_luz marina

03 – Buster rides again_doppler

04 – Amber gris [play](#)

05 – We're all connected

Musicians:

John Medeski - Piano, Melodica

Chris Wood - Bass

Billy Martin - Drums, Percussion

Is it once a decade that we listeners are entitled to an entirely acoustic Medeski, Martin and Wood album? At the start of the 90's their debut "Notes from the Underground" set a high bar. 2000's "Tonic", a live album titled after the now defunct New York City performance space, came out after several organ and keyboard oriented recordings. And now this album, generous with woody timbers, big grooves and inspired improvisations.

The combination of Wood's deep pocketed bass lines, Martin's precise but unpredictable beats and Medeski's unrelentingly perfect note choice is captured on this ebullient release. Recorded at a recent tour date in Japan and released by Tzadik, the release goes to support a current downtown New York City performance space, The Stone.

"Tutrasai", kicks things off with a quiet but insistent groove by Martin and Wood with Medeski tossing some glittering notes into the mix. It builds a little intensity and then the piano lays on a

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hip angular melody that the audience picks up on immediately. The extended middle eastern theme gives way to more lush, but still slightly off-kilter, piano chords and finally into a extended jam that interpolates a bluesy feel within the harmonic minor theme. Clever use of dynamics brings the song to a hushed, almost mysterious, conclusion leading us to the smokey beginning of "Riffin' Ed - Luz Marina." This 23 minute tour-de-force starts with the rhythm section laying down a thick groove and then the piano responds -- there are moments that follow where I fully expect that Medeski was up on the piano jumping up and down on keyboard. All members come to the front during 'Buster Rides Again/Doppler', trading solos and working off each other. The excitement is palpable in each performance, and whether the group is going for the jugular or tentatively exploring the fringes, the audience reciprocates throughout.

This album is a really enjoyable mix of everything (except the electronics) that has made MMW such an enduring group. The spare instrumentation allows the group to really explore time, space and melody, all of which are in abundance. The thick soulful grooves makes the album a palatable listen from the moment the needle drops and the musicianship makes repeated listenings a must. The only part that knocks it back a half star for me is the use of the melodica during the concluding theme "We're All Connected". There are some moments in this breezy tune, that while certainly crowd pleasing, are perhaps more enjoyable in person than on record. Minor quibble really, this a nice gift from MMW, and one whose proceeds benefit an important anti-establishment establishment. ---Paul Acquaro

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