Matthew Halsall - Colour Yes (2009)



1. Colour Yes 8:40 2. Together 11:09 3. I've Found Joy 5:37 4. Mudita 5:22 5. I've Been Here Before 13:09 6. Me And You 6:43 Double Bass – Gavin Barras Drums – Gaz Hughes (tracks: 3, 4, 5 & 6), Marek Dorcik (tracks: 1, 2) Harp – Rachael Gladwin (tracks: 2, 5 & 6) Piano – Adam Fairhall Soprano Saxophone – Nat Birchall (tracks: 1, 3) Tenor Saxophone – Nat Birchall (tracks: 2, 4, 5 & 6) Trumpet – Matthew Halsall

Just gorgeous. Manchester-based trumpeter Matthew Halsall's second album ploughs the same delicate, acoustic, modal jazz furrow as his debut, Sending My Love (Gondwana, 2008). The lineup of fellow Mancunians is much the same too, with flautist Roger Wickham replaced by harpist Rachael Gladwin on three of the six tracks. Just so there's no mistaking where Halsall is coming from, the cover art is also a near-clone of that used on the first disc.

Colour Yes will delight fans of the dreamy astral jazz played by pianist/harpist Alice Coltrane, and that of saxophonists John Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders in their more reflective moments. Above all, it will bring a warm glow to enthusiasts for trumpeter Miles Davis and pianist Bill Evans circa Kind Of Blue (Columbia, 1959). They may also be grateful that Halsall does not, at this point in his career anyway, feel the need to adopt Davis' dictum: "I always gotta change, it's like a curse." In the case of Colour Yes, more of the same, lovely, gently swinging, uncomplicated beauty is a blessing.

Halsall is the possessor of a singularly bright trumpet tone, which shimmers throughout the album free of mutes or any noticeable post-production electronic manipulation. The six tunes, all of them originals, range from the leisurely to the slow, the pace and intensity heating up only on the bouncy dance track "Mudita." On the first three tracks, Halsall sits out the first three minutes or so, allowing saxophonist Nat Birchall to state the theme and set the mood. Birchall is another joy; his soprano is pretty and nimble, and so too is his tenor, on which he favors the upper

register approached from much the same direction.

It's sometimes said of a post-Bill Evans pianist that he or she places as much importance on the space between notes as on the notes themselves, and this is abundantly true of Halsall's pianist, Adam Fairhall, and his less-is-more style. It's also true of Gladwin. Avoiding the temptation simply to reprise Alice Coltrane's approach to the instrument, Gladwin replaces Coltrane's cascading waterfalls of sound with carefully picked single note phrases punctuated by block-chorded comping. Her solos on "Together" and, in particular, on the album's 13-minute centerpiece, "I've Been Here Before," are highlights of the set.

Bassist Gavin Barras and drummers Gaz Hughes (four tracks) and Marek Dorcik (two) provide unobtrusive but softly pulsing rhythms, while Hughes uses his sticks more emphatically to propel the aforementioned "Mudita" forward.

Late-night listening par excellence, Colour Yes also has depth, focus and integrity. It doesn't waste words, and it says a lot. ---Chris May, allaboutjazz.com

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