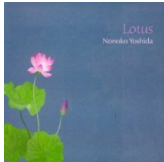


Nonoko Yoshida - Lotus (2015)

Wpisany przez bluesever
Środa, 22 Czerwiec 2016 13:21 -

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1. *Take the F Train* 2. *Desert Island* 3. *Taka 14* 4. *Lotus (improvisation)* 5. *Uru-kas* 6. *Excerpt From 15 Lunatics (for my mother)* 7. *East River* Nonoko Yoshida – alto saxophone

Nonoko Yoshida is young Japanese sax player, residing in New York from 2006. She played with Ron Anderson PAK, and Cyro Baptista, as well running few her own projects, associated with New York Down Town scene.

"Lotus" is her solo debut - and true "solo" album since only Nonoko saxophone is credited in a list. Still album's music is richer than just ascetic soloing saxophone free improvs collection - there are lot of overdubbing (or/and playing against herself/use of electronic devices). Album's title and even more cover art doesn't associate with what we usually expect from such kind of music. Nonoko doesn't play esoteric ambient-like sound wallpapers nor very "out" harsh and unorganized free saxophone solos, only slightly related with more orthodox definition of jazz (and the music in whole). What she plays contains elements of both above mentioned genres, plus much more.

"Lotus" with no doubt is pure free jazz album, and it is great modern free jazz album. Looking back to the genre's early years, "angry young man" Archie Shepp sounded genuine in his explosive and even attacking anger in early 70s (and as many other greatest genre artists he's not angry any more for decades). Few generations of free jazz players have changed from that time, and every next one borrowed anger and harshness as part of tradition, losing the content more and more. On modern avantgarde jazz scene one can find lot of uninspired "angry men" (who are even not "young" anymore) who's anger, and loudness, and harshness are all hardly more than simply a frightened way to keep in secret the absolute absence of creative ideas.

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Yoshida's "Lotus" is radically different. There are energy, some dissonance and yes - some harshness, but all these sound as authentic as it sounded on Shepp's "The Magic Of Ju Ju". "Lotus" is a great title for the music, which balances Western nervous rushing (and sometimes self-destructing) world's free jazz cacophony with Japanese melodic folksy tunes' beauty and ageless harmony. Nonoko's biggest merit is how masterly she combines two very different foldable parts in one organic mix. Many tried only a few succeeded.

All albums compositions can be divided on those where free jazz dominates and more Eastern harmonies based songs. Both are placed in order smartly interchanging each other. Opener "Take A F Train" can blow your minds (and possibly even a head), then "Desert Island", placed right after is just a slightly modified and modernized Japanese folk song of rare beauty. Overlaying of saxophone solos doesn't kill music's vitality but adds lot of drama and transforms ascetic by default solely saxophone recorded sound to something what could be played by small band.

Short, only slightly longer than half an hour of music, album is so easy listenable, that one can be surprised how soon the music stops playing, and I am almost sure many will give it another spin right after.

Great debut, very positive and energizing music not overcrowded with aesthetics of destruction so widely widespread nowadays. Sunbeam in a dark room of those tired from "angry old men" and smug chamber formalists. --- jazzmusicarchives.com

Featuring Nonoko Toshida on solo alto sax. Ms. Yoshida had been growing in leaps and bounds since moving here nearly a decade ago. On every disc she is on, her playing keeps getting stronger and more focused. Starting with Super Seaweed Sex Scandal, two great discs by Pet Bottle Ningen on Tzadik and last year's under-recognized gem: PAK with Ron Anderson and Tatsuya Yoshida (no relation), and now this, her first solo effort. Nonoko played here at DMG recently both in duo and a solo, both super fine. We could tell that she has been working on solo performances since her playing was so focused. "Lotus" is Nonoko's first solo offering and holy sh*t, it is amazing! It is a mixture of studio and live recordings, a strong blend. Starting with "Take the F Train", Nonoko explodes with several layers of tight, intense overdubbed lines.

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Incredible! You can tell that Ms. Yoshida put a great deal of time into this disc as the pieces are well-worked out. On "Desert Island", there are several layers of saxes, harmonized in a most charming way with a superb, poignant solo emerging on top. I dig the way Nonoko takes certain phases and repeats them, slowly twisting and turning the melodies inside-out in a most compelling way. Some of Ms. Yoshida's melodies have a sort of folky or traditional sound, although I am not so sure what tradition that is. "Taka 14" actually sounds like the World Sax Quartet jamming with John Zorn on top, no easy feat I assure you. Solo sax discs are not as rare as they used to be although making one that is as successful and diverse as this one is an impressive one. Ms. Yoshida has studied with Ned Rothenberg and is obviously influenced of some of the extended techniques of John Zorn. Some of her solos takes these sounds/ideas and twist them into her own shapes and forms. Some solo sax efforts are too extreme for certain listeners but this one is very well-balanced and more diverse than one might imagine. A modest masterwork from one of Downtown's best new voices on sax! --- Bruce Lee Gallanter, DMG

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