

GREG DRYGALA

**FLORIAN FAVRE TRIO****Ur**

Traumton

This is one recording that really knocked me out and gave me a whole lot of pleasure. There's the pure eruption of clean energy from the beginning of the title piece *Ur*, played on prepared piano, and the power of the music was not coming from cannon like shot, but from the emotional congestion between the notes.

Million Miles Away takes us back to the feeling of the opening, with a prepared piano intro and lurking rhythm, following the piano's counterpoint lead with shy feeling, and giving the piece an unusual tension. Favre's melody building reminds me of early Brad Mehldau, and it's fascinating to see how he has developed his own language from recent classics. Listening to his *Cobble Hill* makes me particularly happy because I can hear that someone is finally around who can take over what was left by Esbjorn Svensson; his achievement is now becoming a modern piano language in a natural evolutionary way, rather than simply quoted or repeated.

Hyperactive Nocturne is a jolly and humorous track with constantly changing tempos that make it very powerful. This is a totally convincing composition, and in my opinion the best track on the recording. I can listen to it endlessly without getting bored, and the exquisite drumming of Arthur Hnatek frames it in a beautiful way. It might be only February as I write, but I reckon I already have my piano record of the year in my hands.

**DR. LONNIE SMITH****Evolution**

Blue Note

One might ask suspiciously if a 73 year old giant of the Hammond B3 organ can make any further Evolution, yet the answer is a surprisingly big 'yes'. The set starts with Smith's long time hits. *Play It Back* takes no prisoners with two drummers and a guest appearance of Robert Glaspar on piano. It stands out when compared to original *Live At Club Mozambique* recording made 45 years back, and from a pure funk piece, driven by the usual 4/4 beat, it moved into a rich two-keyboard dialogue, full of chunky, percussive B3 chops.

Afrodesia, another 40 year old tune, goes through a similar makeover. Here Smith invited his old band mate Joe Lovano, who was on the original recording, to the session. *Straight No Chaser* surprises with its fast tempo and modern approach; Smith's touch is gentle here, distanced from the opening cannonade, and the opening notes of *My Favorite Things* are somewhat similar.

Summing up, we've got at least two Evolutions here. In the first place there's the transition of a young lion, who left the Blue Note label as a cub, and has now returned with a crown on his had. Secondly there's the mature lifetime achievement of the Hammond organist who made his way through the funk era, co-creating the movement, and at his later days is still proving that there is still future for the funk waiting to be discovered.

**ERIK TRUFFAZ QUARTET****Doni Doni**

Parlophone/Warner Music France

After three years of silence, the most recognised French trumpeter is back. His new quartet features trusted friends like bass man Marcello Giuliani, Benoit Corboz on piano and keyboards. And with Arthur Hnatek taking over on drums, Truffaz rhythmic approach has a new life. Inviting special guests to the session has a long tradition, and here we have two leading Malian musicians: Rokia Traore (on 4 tracks) and Oxmo Puccino.

Comptine is an unusual introduction, but Traore's vocal takes us straight to the polyphonic universe of the African folk tradition. *Kudu*, with the leader's trumpet up front, takes us into more familiar sound territories, as Truffazz' sonic universe is built on Miles Davis-like long melodic phrases. *Pacheco* is one example of the typical Truffazz sound; *Szerelem* is another.

Together with *Fat City* they create a kind of suite, with Truffazz' traditional groovy approach creating a dialogue with the Malian musicians, who bring a more polyrhythmic approach to the table. In *Doni Doni* (step by step in Malian), the trumpeter's response to Rokia's vocals keeps building bridges. The instrumental version of the title song nicely explores the background of the melody, blended with an African folk music influence, while here Hnatek again shows what a versatile drummer he can be, whenever the music demands it. To sum up, this is another great album which I am sure will be warmly welcomed by Truffazz's many fans, which includes myself.