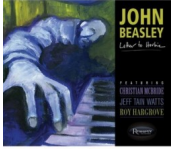


John Beasley - Letter to Herbie (2008)

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 18 September 2011 18:32 - Last Updated Sunday, 14 December 2014 22:33

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01. 4 a.m. 02. Bedtime voyage 03. Chan's song 04. Three finger snap 05. The naked camera 06. Eye of the hurricane 07. Diana [download](#) 08. Hear and now 09. Still time [download](#) 10. Vein melter

Personnel: John Beasley (piano, grand piano, Fender Rhodes piano, Clavinet, synthesizer); Michael O'Neill (guitar); Steve Tavaglione (alto flute, bass clarinet, synthesizer); Roy Hargrove (trumpet); Christian McBride (acoustic bass, electric bass); Jeff "Tain" Watts, Luis Conte (drums, percussion).

Those who don't yet know John Beasley are missing the opportunity to hear one of the best pianists and improvisers on the jazz scene today. Beasley is a master musician, with total command of the jazz language, and his playing is always intense in both emotion and technique.

John Beasley's 2009 album, Positootly (Resonance) was nominated, more than deservedly, for a Grammy Award for best jazz instrumental album. Even though Letter to Herbie, his previous album released in 2008, was not nominated for a Grammy, it might as well have been.

Both albums have striking similarities in the quality of the music and musicians; every one of them is at the top of their game on this album. What comes out of this group of jazz giants is music that keeps the mind engaged and always guessing what's coming up next; with constant tempo changes and creative, virtuosic improvisations.

Contrary to Positootly's collection of mostly Beasley originals, Letter to Herbie is dedicated to the music of Herbie Hancock. The swinging "Three Finger Snap" and the elegant "Here and

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Now" are the only John Beasley originals on the album, both featuring the rhythmic and harmonic complexity to stand beside Hancock's compositions.

Taking on the music of Herbie Hancock, one of the best pianists in jazz history, is not an easy task, but Beasley and his group do a superb job reinventing some of his masterpieces. Beasley's arrangements of "The Naked Camera" and "Vein Melter" are funkier and livelier than Hancock's versions, while the waltz-like arrangement of "Diana" and fast swinging tempo of "Eye of the Hurricane" are closer to the originals.

Letter to Herbie is an excellent tribute to an excellent musician. ---Wilbert Sostre, allaboutjazz.com

Jazz pianist John Beasley embarks upon a supremely inspired effort with his new album, Letter to Herbie, taking its cues from both the philosophies and compositions of music great Herbie Hancock. The 10-song CD features Beasley reshaping classic works from across several decades of Hancock's catalog while also contributing originals that bear the stamp of his ideologies. Beasley is primarily showcased in a trio format flanked by first-call bassist Christian McBride and propulsive drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts, with special guest trumpeter Roy Hargrove sitting in on a few numbers and the addition of flautist Steve Tavaglione, percussionist Luis Conte and guitarist Michael O'Neal adding color to a few others. ---resonancerecords.org

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