

Jerzy Malek – Air (2011)

Written by bluesever

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01 Slavs 10:15 02 Starka 7:11 03 White Tulips 10:18 04 Specjal 7:44 05 Air 8:18 06 Benio 7:37
Personnel: Jerzy Małek - trumpet Marcin Wasilewski - piano Michał Barański - double bass Michał Miskiewicz – drums

Trumpeter Jerzy Malek is a good example of the strong wave of young Polish jazz musicians coming to the Polish Jazz scene over the last few years. I am not jazz critic and I will never be. I have neither talent nor inclination in this direction. If you need proof for such my statement this text will provide good one. Why? Because this is album that many critics will disqualify while I wholeheartedly admire it! Before I clarify this situation let me tell you few words about players and this project. Jerzy Małek is arguably the most talented among young trumpeters in Poland (along with Artur Majewski). He is THE most in demand sideman in Poland playing in countless projects: always successful, always inspiring to his partners. But he nevertheless has modest achievements as a leader. Yes, he recorded something like 5 CDs released under his own name but honestly none of them persuaded critics that he is already stand-alone leader capable of joining the greatest in Polish jazz. So this time Małek invited musicians and composed music of such quality and caliber as to once and for all to silence all doubts about his talent. As for musicians better are impossible to find not only in Poland but anywhere! Marcin Wasilewski is on piano whom we know from playing with Tomasz Stańko or in his own trio (check his newest "Faithful"). Michał Miśkiewicz, a drummer, is long-time companion of Wasilewski from Stańko quartet and member of above mentioned trio as well. While Michał Barański, himself absolute top player in Poland, in a smart move by Małek, has replaced third member of Marcin Wasilewski Trio, Sławomir Kurkiewicz, to alter rhythm section sound and make it more flexible in order to adjust it to the leader conceptions. Now as for music, it is all composed by the leader, and it sounds stylish, elegant yet simple and communicative. Although the root of this music is definitely bop and Małek's eclectic style is full of influences from Miles Davis through Lee Morgan or Booker Ervin to Tomasz Stańko, still he quite often sets his voice free. Certainly it's not free in Don Cherry ricochet but rather in Kenny Wheeler conceptual style. But the soul of this music is the beauty of the sound which is magnificent and augmented by excellent play by rhythm section. Marcin Wasilewski piano is capable of both to swing or drive full throttle in typical hard bop style. Michał Miskiewicz drums deliver great punch AND palette full of colours

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to this music. Michał Barański bass is solid rhythm anchor for Małek fly-aways while his voice remains individual enough never to be mistaken with anybody's else. So what's non-critic verdict on this CD? I do not care that it is nothing new, that musicians stay on so well-known ground, that it more looks back, towards classical roots of music, towards Schumann, Chopin or Haydn than towards American music distant shore. I know I still like it so much that my position is simple: album of the month!!!

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