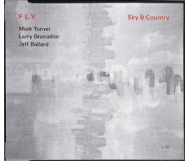


Fly - Sky And Country (2008)

Written by bluesever

Wednesday, 21 August 2019 14:36 -

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1 Lady B 7:24 2 Sky & Country 6:40 3 Elena Berenjena 5:15 4 CJ 7:29 5 Dharma Days 5:05 6 Anandananda 10:34 7 Perla Morena 5:45 8 Transfigured 8:38 9 Super Sister 10:50 Double Bass – Larry Grenadier Drums – Jeff Ballard Tenor Saxophone, Soprano Saxophone – Mark Turner

Fly is a co-op trio of saxophonist Mark Turner, bassist Larry Grenadier, and drummer Jeff Ballard, who have played together off-and-on, individually with many other bands, and can easily be pegged in the vanguard of young and experienced post-to-neo-bop jazz stars of the 2000s. Turner carries the post-Michael Brecker tradition proudly in a more restrained mood, Grenadier is as solid a current day bassist as there is since working with Brad Mehldau, and Ballard's experience with Chick Corea or bassist Avishai Cohen, among many others, has seen him develop into a top five jazz drummer, in demand and via the scope of his playing. This is not a typical ECM recording, as it is more straight-ahead modern mainstream jazz, and not nearly the European classical esoteric or ethereal music the label is known for. There's real teamwork in executing this type of jazz that borrows from Blue Note label styles, John Coltrane, or Wayne Shorter, and moves the music forward without a serrated edge or overtly complex harmonic blowing. Each musician contributes a handful of compositions, with Ballard as the lead soldier in that department. "Lady B" is prototypical, rambling N.Y.C. Brecker Brothers/Steps Ahead 1980s neo-bop, his "Perla Morena" a Spanish tinged, spirited tune in 6/8 with the drummer's amazing, ever changing rhythmic patterns over Turner's even keeled tenor, and the title track is the most atmospheric ECM-like track, somewhat funky and dark via Turner's soprano sax. Clever stairstep phrases identify the even funkier "Elena Berenjena," a rocking hard bop with a contemporary side centers the spiky, modal "Dharma Days" á la Coltrane, "Anandananda" is a long free solo tenor to bass to jazz tango, and "Super Sister" moves forcefully and urgently with Grenadier's booming bass, strong but not brash jazz, all composed by Turner. "CJ" and "Transfigured" are penned by Grenadier, the former a very slow, reticent, but true to soul ballad, while the latter is free and languid, with Turner's soprano sax and bowed bass tones evoking a mood of trudging carriage and slowly evolving life. For a first go this is a very credible effort and hopefully not a one shot, from a band that is touring in support of the music, which hopefully can grow into the top drawer ensemble it can easily be. ---Michael G.

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