

Jazz Wax 4507 (vinyl)

This set was recorded shortly after the break up of the very popular J.J. Johnson/Kai Winding combo which featured the two trombonists with rhythm section. Winding continued the theme with a four-trombone lineup as J.J. decided a quartet with rhythm was the best way to express himself – although outside the recording studio, the group sometimes including tenor man Bobby Jaspar.

Recently released as part of a two-LP CD issue, this vinyl release will be mainly for audiophiles and jazz folk who like their music in this format. Johnson was the complete trombone soloist in modern jazz and he is on very good form here. He wrote three of the pieces played including *Harvey's House*, one of his rare but in this case successful ventures into blues territory.

J.J. whips through *Paper Moon* with driving support from Chambers and Roach and is effective on the much slower *Paul's Pal*, a Sonny Rollins line written for the bassist on a 1956 Prestige session. His jazz ballad artistry comes into strong focus on *For Heaven's Sake* and his blues solo on *Harvey's House* will surprise some listeners.

Be My Love and the old Julie London hit *Cry Me A River* may seem strange choices but Johnson puts his own brand of improvisation to work to produce fascinating versions. A rhythm section with Flanagan, Chambers and Roach can only enhance any combo and here they furnish first-rate swinging support throughout. Crisp, clean sound on 180-gram premium vinyl brings every note of the music to life.

Derek Ansell

SØREN KJÆRGAARD

OPEN OPUS

Like A Motherless Sun (For Sun Ra); Floating World (Ukiyo); Kanon-I-Ka; Open Opus 3; Places Birds Fly From; Open Opus 5; Fatha; Abrahms' Paraphrase; Naya (48.56)

Søren Kjærgaard (p); Ben Street (b); Andrew Cyrille (d, pc). New York, 2-30 May, 16 June 2008.

ILK166CD

From the skewed Monkish flavour of *Kanon-I-Ka* (*Pannonica*?) to the oddly-titled *Abrahms' Paraphrase*, one has the impression that both the titles and the music here are full of intellectual nods and winks. Put that together with

the avant-garde pedigree of the playing and this album is something of a clever sonic puzzle. Intriguing and cerebral, even if the ear cannot solve it completely, it can admire the ingenuity of its shape and form.

Pianist Kjærgaard is a leading figure on the contemporary Danish scene and this is the second album he has made with this trio, featuring the New York-based Street and Cecil Taylor alumnus, Cyrille. The trio retained the services of sound engineer James Farber from their first disc and the clarity of the recording and separation of the instruments is quite perfect. The subtleties of the dialogue are all there to be easily grasped.

And subtlety is what it's all about. Free-flowing abandon features throughout but coupled with a subdued restraint; this is no noisefest nor is it excessively experimental. It's a record of three musicians listening closely to each other and relentlessly exploring and probing the ground that lies between them. Whether the sheer telepathy of the title-track group improvisations or the sparse, pointillistic delicacy of *Floating World (Ukiyo)* this is cross-generational improvisation of a high standard.

As a passing note, for a more outright experimental foray – striding at times into the surreal – Kjærgaard's other current release is a duo album with painter, poet, artist, filmmaker and former international tennis pro, Torben Ulrich. Titled *Alphabet, Peaceful,*

Diminished: 29 Proposals From The Towers Of Babble, its more restrained moments are reminiscent of Tony Scott's *Music For Zen Meditation And Other Joys*.

Dave Foxall

RAMÓN LÓPEZ FREEDOM NOW SEXTET

VALENCIA

Alacant; Cas I Ànima; Bullirà El Mar; Els Xiquets; Misteri; Horitzó; Llum I Vent; Llotja De La Seda; Cava Del Bolomar; Xàbia; Fets D'Amor; Sis Poemes; Canço De Comiat (54.51)

Ramón López (a); Herb Robertson (f); Ivo Perelman (ts); Joe Morris (g); Agustí Fernández (p); Barry Guy (b).

Valencia, 8-9 August 2009.

Xàbia CD 008

The impressively melodic drum solo *Alacant* begins this album and is a tribute to López's hometown, better known to holiday-makers as Alicante. It is this difference in nomenclature (using the regional Valencian language rather than the national Castilian) that underlines the album's theme, a local pride and a paean to his geographical roots. Every year, the Xàbia Jazz Festival commissions a Valencian musician to write, and then record, a suite of music for the festival. In 2009, that musician was Ramón López.

The Freedom Now Sextet (an undoubted nod to Max Roach, whom the liner notes name as an influence on López) is drawn from

Merseysippi Jazz Band: sounds well-drilled but manages a loose cohes

