

devices sound more self-conscious (given enough time, all innovations become clichés.) Some of the originals, like "Wild Is the Wind," are essentially compilations of gestures. On "Wild Is the Wind," attempts at tension-and-release lack resolution—probably because, at this late hour, we know they are coming.

Samal's single greatest gift is his ability to know when to stop. Long ago it enabled him to break through the culture. It still enables him to do "The Way You Look Tonight" comically seductive, simply by reassigning notes to create revelations of feeling.

CONRAD

## JORGENSEN + 451

*Morning* (Origin)

On the Seattle quartet's first recording since *Hope* in 2004, Matt Jorgensen + 451 continues to explore a particular brand of jazz that is more subtle than your average, thrashing, over-the-top jazz. However, leader Jorgensen's fiery, tirelessly busy drumming often overpowers and distracts from the group sound of the soloists. Mark Taylor plays sweet-toned alto, with a lyrical, restrained improvisational style. Keyboardist Ryan Burns has a controlled style on organ, Moog or Rhodes, the latter played with a chimelike tone. Bassist Phil Sparks adds thick and penetrating sound and jazz sensibility in his solos.

Jorgensen's drum work fits best on adventurous pieces, such as "Morning" with its industrial-strength, pumping theme, and Lennon/Richards' "Helter Skelter," with Burns' rapt Moog solo and Taylor's "Power to the People." Joe Henderson's "Power to the People" is another well-balanced track, with excellent solos by special guest Thomas Marriott, Taylor on Fender Rhodes, while Burns offers his most sensitive and supportive. The rockish version of "Ohio" also works well, high-guest guitarist Jason Goessl's tortion-laden improv. The other tracks are also full of stimulating solos, the soulful "New Beginnings," "Birds," the mellow "Spectre," "Lock Down" and the plaintive "My." A less intense Jorgensen made these five selections even better.

ALBIN

## SØREN KJÆRGAARD

*Optics* (ILK)



There is a somnambulant quality to *Optics*, a kind of waking-life feeling. Søren Kjærgaard, a 29-year-old Danish pianist, recruited bassist Ben Street and the phenomenal drummer Andrew Cyrille for this trio, and, boy, do they listen to one another.

Cyrille, known for his work with the likes of Cecil Taylor and Oliver Lake, is the senior member, and much of what happens revolves around him. The 14-minute title track that opens the CD demands patience from its musicians. Kjærgaard plots out deep, serious chords, employing dramatic pauses as the rumble of mallets on skins establishes the tone. Street picks deliberately on the upper neck of his bass as Kjærgaard then lays down an ascending series of minor chords. A quiet snare roll, a repeated three-key phrase played lightly—this is minimalist bliss. On "Cyrille Surreal," icy, detached chords play against a reluctant swing rhythm, but things evolve, as they always do, and rowdiness finally replaces inertia.

Some of the song titles are unfortunate (including the aforementioned one). "Mallets"? No, the tune is cleverer, and more fun, than that. Kjærgaard's staccato notes and chords conjure a movie scene: How about calling it "Gene Hackman chases Tom Cruise through the streets of Memphis"? This idea, piano as percussion, informs much of the album. "Work of Art" has the pianist playing melody and rhythm, despite the fact that it's a duet—a percussive duet—with Cyrille. The disc ends with the funeral "Radio House Requiem," an elegy for Danish Radio, which ceased most of its jazz programming last year because of budget cuts. We hope that doesn't mean Kjærgaard has lost an outlet in his homeland. **STEVE GREENLEE**

## ADAM KOLKER

*Flag Day* (Sunnyside)



For the first minute and a half of saxist Adam Kolker's calmly brilliant new album, the sound we hear is his probing, playful and relaxed horn by its lonesome. Enter the band, and not just any band: Drummer Paul Motian gently folds in his unique and slippery sense of time and color, and guitarist John Abercrombie goes on one of his signature search-and-deploy solos, while bassist John Hebert rumbles and grounds in the right

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