



the meliorist

by [Sam Taylor](#)

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A New Face

If you've met [Bobby Avey](#), a pianist/composer with seemingly endless talent and ambition - not to mention a gravity defying, vertical learning scope - you know any project bearing his name will be something special. *A New Face*, his remarkable debut album, is a bold declaration from an intelligent, thoughtful musician.

Undeniably an accomplished pianist, Avey's expansive compositional style seems to be his true means of expression and communication. The songs for this album, performed by bassist Thomas Kneeland and drummer Jordan Perlson, range from fiery angular romps to beautiful abstractions. Kneeland and Perlson, accomplished musicians with expansive resumes, are a natural fit for Avey and his music. Their groove is steady as they deftly handle the pull and tug of alternate meters, off-kilter bass lines, and intricate harmonies.

Saxophonist David Liebman, a mentor of Avey's, joins the trio on four tracks. He is a commanding presence for sure, but not overbearing. Listeners come to expect fierce intensity, urgency and power from Liebman, and he delivers on all counts. *Influence*, however - the quiet saxophone/piano duo - exposes the true connection Avey shares with Liebman. Meditative and somber, perhaps drawing from Scriabin, it sounds like a twenty first century folk song. (Liebman and Avey issued a previous duo release, *Vienna Dialogues*, in 2006.)

A New Face, while impressive on a technical level is hardly "musicians' music"; it may require extra attentive ears and deeper concentration, yet there is an arc and a story in these songs. Playing with clarity and a sense of purpose, Avey has separated himself from the futile struggle to be relevant or hip - something that has ensnared a number of his contemporaries. This standout album is what I expect will be the beginning of a long, dizzily exciting road for Avey and listeners alike.

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