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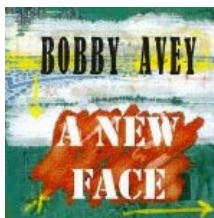
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A New Face

Bobby Avey | Jay Dell Records (2010)

By Dan McClenaghan

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The CD is called *A New Face*, referring to the set's leader, pianist Bobby Avey. He was an even "newer" face on 2006's *Vienna Dialogues* (Zoho Music), a duet set with veteran saxophonist David Liebman that explored the music of pre-twentieth century classical composers, including Mendelssohn, Schumann, Mahler and Brahms.

For this, Avey's debut as a leader, the pianist has put together modern-thinking jazz trio, in the mode of Jason Moran or Vijay Iyer. Liebman's back, sitting in on four of the eight tunes, fanning the flames of an already fiery set of sounds.

The composition are all Avey originals. Its music treads the edge, often with an attitude. Avey and his cohorts balance between controlled Iyer-like intensity, veering into abject abandon, beginning with the dark-toned "Late November." The piano trio tune begins with a driving, hypnotic rhythm, burning with an implacable forward momentum with moments of beautiful release shot through with explosive outbursts.

Liebman joins in on "In Retreat." It's a drifting mood that gathers energy and reveals Avey's very assured artistic approach that includes metronomic repetition on his idiosyncratic solo, out of which Liebman's soprano explodes.

The sequencing of the set is deftly executed, alternating between trio and quartet, with one saxophone/piano duet thrown in. Bassist Thomas Kneeland and drummer Jordan Pearlson add distinctive, assertive and modernistic frames of mind to the sound, with Kneeland opening the title tune with a piquant bass solo leading into some of Avey's most tender playing. On "Half is Less Than Half," drummer Pearlson flirts with clamor, much in the manner of Jim Black, but it's a flirtation that always serves Avey's sometimes prickly compositions well.

The lone duet piece, "Influence," is a peaceful reverie, with Liebman's soprano sounding particularly round-toned, and Avey's piano touch rolling into more lush areas as the mood grows in the direction of the ominous. Then the trio goes for it on "Insight" with an exaggerated tension release dynamic, and closes out with Liebman back in the fold, wailing with an inspired heartiness on tenor saxophone in front of a tight rhythmic architecture constructed by the newer faces in the trio.

A stand-out debut by an indisputable rising star.

Track listing: Late November; In Retreat; Delusional; A New Face; Half is Less Than Half; Influence; Insight; Time Unfolding.

Personnel: Bobby Avey: piano; David Liebman: soprano and tenor saxophones (2, 4, 6, 8); Thomas Kneeland: bass (1-5, 7-8); Jordan Pearlson; drums (1-5, 7-8).

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