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Jason Rigby – One (Fresh Sound New Talent)



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The Terminals — Antiseptic: "just as likely to



Dubbed the Detroit-Cleveland Trio by saxophonist Jason Rigby, its ostensible leader, the lean and emotive ensemble showcased on *One* wears its regional parity proudly. Rigby’s surname might not ring bells for familiarity for listeners versed in jazz history, but his esteemed colleagues bassist Cameron Brown and drummer Gerald Cleaver together representing the Motor City side of the equation almost certainly will. Brown’s been on more sessions than can be counted on ten sets of fingers and Cleaver’s balanced a busy schedule between leader and sideman dates for years. Both are venerated first call musicians who routinely have their pick of enviable gigs.

Rigby seems to recognize his good fortune right off by presenting a program sequenced evenly with originals and cherry-picked covers that are outfitted for the sort of focused studio blowing that retains the looseness of a live gig. Cleaver’s rumbling cans open “Dive Bar” with a sustained and fervent flourish. Rigby enters and rides the rhythmic surf, cutting across the steady rumble at his flank with a string of register climbing flutters and digressions. Brown arrives on “Dorian Gray” with a tumescent, pulsating ostinato to which Cleaver adds a gliding, garrulous backbeat. Rigby lays into the resulting groove with a light and lively phrasing that contrasts with the more aggressive stances of his partners while echoing the duality alluded to in the title.

“You Are Too Beautiful” and the Gershwin’s “Embraceable You” register Rigby’s creative rigor on standards. Cleaver breaks out the brushes on the former for a tempo crawl and the leader broadens his tone with a throaty breadth that blends amorous intent and a lullaby-like plushness. Brown’s supple walking accompaniment completes the romance-ready package. Rigby approaches the latter tune sans support, phrasing a line with an abiding airiness such that click of pads audible as a rhythmic adjunct. Herbie Hancock’s “Speak Like A Child” delivers another ballad setting shaded a duskier hue with Rigby playing coy about the theme on soprano saxophone by turns lilting and cusplate.

“Newtoon” and the concluding “Dewey” feature the trio the service of long-form material. The first unfurls at a staggered crawl, Rigby spooling out rounded melodic coils on tenor within a variable speed rhythmic vortex stirred by Brown and Cleaver before dropping out to leave bass and drums to their collective complementary devices. Rigby opens the second slightly off mic with another burst of clenched reed flutters. Brown and Cleaver repeatedly build and disperse giving the piece booster of tension that the leader uses a series of sprightly, stair-stepping phrasings. None of the players are reinventing the figurative wheel here, but the chemistry they share keeps the familiar from feeling clichéd or colorless.

Derek Taylor

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