

sistently brought the musical goods. His latest *Number Five* continues his winning streak as one of the best!

What's initially interesting and inspiring about this particular recording is Harrell's desire to expand and grow. Yes, he's basically working in his tried and true framework of post-bop material but he experiments with different harmonic structures and works in duet and acapella formats. A case in point is the opening track "Blue 'n' Boogie." This is a Dizzy Gillespie tune shown loving reverence but done as a duet between Harrell and drummer Blake. The leader has an absolutely brilliant command of the trumpet, briskly blowing through virtual and implied changes upon a feathery bed of lithe and rhythmic accents. "Right as Rain" is a slow and thoughtful ballad that showcases stellar performances from Harrell and saxophonist Escoffery. Featured are wonderful harmonies in a succinct and well measured setting. Title track "No. 5" is a real straight ahead burner. This highlights the entire group at their level best. IN particular, Harrell plays with an almost stream of consciousness where his solos are transcendent and complementary to his musical counterparts. "Journey to the Stars" is a duet between Harrell and pianist Grissett. It bears a nice folksy melody that is open and improvisational. Muted trumpet overdubs provide a soothing backdrop for the leader's warm flugelhorn work. The acoustic piano recalls Keith Jarrett or George Winston, with prominent arpeggios that fill the spaces and accompany very well. "GT" is an open and somewhat avant garde piece. Atonal and inventive solos from the group converge and interlace with eruptive rhythms for a daring and wild ride. "Star Eyes" finds Harrell going it alone, with his first of two acapella compositions on the album. The classic, written by Don Raye and Gene DePaul, is a tender ballad that finds the trumpeter in his element. Not only is he a great interpreter of rarities from the Great American Songbook but he brings a lyricism and elegance to the piece like no other. "The Question" is another interesting Harrell original that is highlighted by Dany Grissett's pristine and vibraphone-like electric piano flourishes. It's a reflective and contemplative work. That's quickly followed by the bright and swinging "Melody in B-Flat." It's a real about face from the previous track featuring exceptional solos from Escoffery. The tune begins with a repetitive odd-metered figure that alternates with the 4/4 swing sections and also serves as a solo vamp vehicle toward the end. Harrell concludes the disc with the second acapella piece called "A Blue Time." The leader is faithful to the Tad Dameron classic and delivers the melody and gentle bop feel with passion and a unique individuality.

John A. Lewis

PROGENATION — Valarteri Records. johnalewisjazz.com. *Progenation: Slip City; Martha's Muse; The Edge of Chaos; Demps; Amor Dans Bleu; One Trip Out; That To That; A Deliterious Affair; Def Jay Pea; Olivia; The Odds.*
PERSONNEL: John A. Lewis, Piano. Compositions: Lincoln Apeland, Bass; Merik Gillett, Drums



By: Nora McCarthy

The John Lewis Trio out of Dallas, Texas, is moving in its own direction with new and unusual compositions. *Progenation*, the 2010 release by leader, pianist, John Lewis is the seventh self-recorded CD released on his label Valarteri Records and is comprised of twelve original compositions.

As its catchy neologistic title suggests, Mr. Lewis is creating his own personal approach and style through his original compositions. He cites Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, and Wayne Shorter as some of his main influences but neither the music nor the playing on *Progenation* bears any resemblance to the aforementioned

Jazz masters; instead he draws his inspiration from their distinctive sound, John Lewis is an emerging new voice in the process.

The twelve original songs are an even-keeled mix of laid back simple Satie-like melodic vignettes comprised mostly of medium tempos, slow bossa groove, a waltz and ballad.

Given the preponderance of like tempos and the absence of tension and release in the overall dynamics the end result is a hypnotically pleasant CD. It is music made to accommodate with its bluesy overtones and non-intrusive presence. Two standouts are "The Edge of Chaos" whose changes are vaguely reminiscent of Andrew Hill's harmonic concepts and the final cut, "The Odds," with its livelier tempo, features Gillett in between the melodic line of the head and at the very end of the piece with a nice solo by Apeland.

It can be honestly said that John Lewis has and does his own thing and if his intent was to coin a new word as it were as a Jazz stylist, I believe he accomplished his goal with *Progenation*.

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