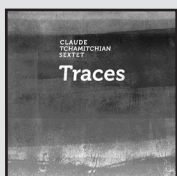


GLOBE UNITY: FRANCE



Traces

Claude Tchamitchian Sextet (Emouvance)

Tournesol

Julien Desprez/Benjamin Duboc/Julien Loutelier
(Dark Tree)

Inspired

Yves Robert Trio (BMC Records)

by Tom Greenland

France once provided a new home for expatriate American musicians seeking refuge from racism, later spawning many fine artists of its own. Today, jazz is no longer a foreign ‘tongue’ there, as many French musicians ‘speak’ it with indigenous authority.

Armenian-French bassist Claude Tchamitchian was first inspired to embrace his cultural roots when he studied under André Jaume at the Avignon conservatory. *Traces*, a sextet offering with vocalist Geraldine Keller, saxophonists Daniel Erdmann and François Corneloup, guitarist Philippe Deschepper and drummer Christophe Marguet, was inspired by *Seuils*, Lebanese-Armenian novelist Krikor Beledian’s memoir of the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide. Like the rediscovered family photos described in his book, each composition is organized around an image of a fictional character or place, fleshed out by vivid spoken word/sung interpretations of Beledian’s prose (translated into French). Much of the music has a low tonal center, anchored by Corneloup’s baritone horn and bowed bass, the melodies reminiscent of Anatolian folk sources, the rhythms, often in odd meters, full-throttle rock.

Tournesol, a short trio set recorded in Paris, takes avant minimalism to an extreme, blending the tones of guitarist Julien Desprez, bassist Benjamin Duboc and percussionist Julien Loutelier into an opaque electro-acoustic soundscape. Like a stagnant pond, the calm surface of the music belies the teeming organic life contained beneath. None of the instruments are recognizable by their signature sounds; rubbed pots and metallophones; digital loopers; bowed percussion; subdued attacks; swelling overtones; and heavy reverberation all add to the thick veil of sound. The result is like watching a movie blindfolded: the soundtrack is there, but the listener is forced to imagine the plot, characters and mise-en-scène.

On *Inspired*, trombonist Yves Robert leads a trio with bassist Bruno Chevillon (like Tchamitchian, a former student of André Jaume) and drummer Cyril Atef, recorded live at Budapest’s Opus Jazz Club. Robert and Chevillon bring impeccable tone, touch and technique while Atef adds world-beat bounce and exuberant vocals, resulting in intelligent, adventurous music with a danceable groove. Chevillon’s incisive plucks, slaps and harmonics, together with Atef’s lively feel on assorted percussion instruments (hand drums, cuíca, shakers), often looped electronically, provide the rhythmic bedrock for Robert’s expressive tone, which might ring high like a trumpet, slur across a fast passage, yowl like a cat or chatter through a mute. Especially compelling moments occur on “Bien dans sa Peau”, “Ideas through Running” and “Cahutchuca”, when the trio collectively accelerates and decelerates over prolonged passages.

For more information, visit emouvance.com, darktree-records.com and bmcrecords.hu