

New Issues

MICHEL BRAAM GLOOMY SUNDAY

BMC 237

OPUS ESPRESSO / Q1 /
THE MAN I LOVE / PIT
STOP BALL AD / ELIZA /
OPUS WALK / GLOOMY
SUNDAY / OPUS SEARCH
/ MEMORIES OF YOU /
CUBA, NORTH RHINE
WESTPHALIA. 43:02.

Michiel Braam - p.
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While there had been solo piano albums before the 70s, they were few and far between. But with the early 70s release of Cecil Taylor's *Indent*, Chick Corea's *Piano Improvisations* and Keith Jarrett's *Facing You*, all within a short span of each other, it seemed to herald a new viability to the concept. And with the (relatively) huge success of Jarrett's 3 LP set, *Köln Concert*, it seemed to assure a steady stream of solo piano albums that has continued to this day. And that is a good thing. It allows the listener to evaluate a pianist on her/his own terms in harmonic conception, handling of rhythm, orchestration and technique. And it gives the pianist room to explore her/his muse unfettered.

Michiel Braam is a pianist who's made his mark on the Dutch jazz scene over the past 30 years with his superb large group *Bik Bent Braam* and his piano trio *Trio Braam De Joode Vatcher*. The first release under his own name was *Oeps*, a solo piano recording from 1989. He released a second disc of solo piano in 2005, *Michiel vs. Braam*. A third album of solo piano, live recorded at Budapest's *Opus Jazz Club*, *Gloomy Sunday* has just been released and brings us up to date on what he is doing these days.

Gloomy Sunday is presented as a continuous 43 minute suite with Braam segueing seamlessly from free improv that collide into originals and well-worn standards refreshingly interpreted. This contrasts to the two previous solo sets, the first of which was all improvisation and the second which interpreted compositions he'd written for large ensembles refashioned as solo pieces. Here the music unfolds in an almost stream of consciousness fashion and nothing sounds forced. Although clearly a modernist, he pays homage to the complete history of jazz piano. A delicate "Man I Love" gradually morphs into "Pit Stop Ball Ad" via a boogie pattern. A high-velocity "Memories Of You" is filled with all manner of sweeps up and down the keyboard. It's a complete and very satisfying program that makes *Gloomy Sunday* well worth investigating. If one doesn't have any music by Braam, this could be a good place to start.

Robert Iannapolo