

Esmerald'
Jazz

DOSSIER DE PRESSE

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Esmerald' Jazz

Leské

Self-released

Gypsy jazz prodigy Antoine Boyer's second solo album was inspired by the passing of his mentor, the late composer,

guitarist, and history raconteur Francis-Alfred Moerman.

Boyer plays with a style and sensibility rare for a teen; almost as if he's channeling the beauty of Moerman's own playing, which always stood apart from the pyrotechnics of so many Gypsy firebrands. Following in Moerman's footsteps, Boyer keeps alive the subtle and often introspective stylings of Baro, Sarane, and Matelo Ferret, who were in turn Moerman's inspirations.

Leské features just Boyer's guitar backed by his father, Sébastien Boyer, playing rhythm guitar and accordion. The sound is simple and pure, with a warmth throughout.

As stunning as Boyer's fretwork is, his wide-ranging songlist mostly eschews the overplayed classics of Gypsy jazz in favor of rare treats. Thus, Tchan Tchou's "La Gitane" waltz is balanced by Sarane Ferret's swinging "Sex Appeal." And in covering Django Reinhardt's waltz, "Montagne Sainte-Geneviève," Boyer adds variations on the theme, creating something new from the old. — **MD**



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June 2010

Hit List

(from Duke Pearson's "Minor League" to Johnny Mercer's "I'm An Old Cowhand"), but Lalama and Hart collaborate on "Jonme." The intriguing sax/guitar duet segues into a beautiful reading of the ballad "Portrait Of Jenny," with Hart providing a lush, chord-melody intro.

In his liner notes, sax great Joe Lovano says of his Nonet band mate Lalama, "Ralph tells a beautiful story throughout each and every piece." The same could be said for Hart. — **DF**



Megan Burt

It Ain't Love

Self-released

The guitar-/keyboard-playing Megan Burt is wounded enough to be skeptical, but too resolute to descend into cynicism.

Burt's music is dark pop with a heavy country tinge and rhythmically charged underlayer. By the time she makes it through the second and third cuts ("Over Me" and "Settle Me Down") it's clear that good stuff is to follow. By the next track, "Habit," it's clear she's also capable of challenging herself. "It Ain't Love," with a solo from guitarist Adam Tessler, is almost country metal, but its sound and feel are natural.

All of the songs here are constructed from elements that are blended together, not tacked on. Berklee degree or not, you can't hit the mark as squarely and as consistently as Burt does without having the right stuff. — **RA**



Paul Meyers Quartet

Paul Meyers Quartet Featuring Frank Wess

Miles High Records

Veteran guitarist Meyers is on a bit of a roll. 2009's *World On a String* was a nylon-string banquet where Meyers mixed jazz, Brazilian music, and a bit of everything else. Here, he and his quartet are joined by veteran jazz saxophonist/flutist Frank Wess. Jazz-guitar fans will recognize his name from the album *Monday Stroll*, which he cut with Kenny Burrell in the late '50s. Half a century later, the same chemistry is at work here between Meyers and Wess.

If there's a common thread here, it's swing. Whether the easygoing feel of "Snibor" with its lovely melody, or the hard swing of "Just One of Those Things," the players mesh seamlessly. Meyer harmonizes the melody with Wess on "Snibor" before his solo effortlessly mixes chords and solo lines;



Gypsy Jazz Historical Revisit

Francis-Alfred Moerman is perhaps the sole surviving elder statesman of Gypsy jazz. He hails from the generation of 1960s guitarists that followed in Django Reinhardt's footsteps; he himself learned firsthand from Django's sidemen, including the fabulous Ferret brothers — Baro, Sarane, and Matelo. Moerman's compositions and recordings are rare gems; classic old-style Gypsy jazz with a personal flavor.

Enter Antoine Boyer, a 13-year-old Gypsy jazz acolyte who became enamored with Moerman's stylish music. With his arms barely reaching around his own Selmer-style guitar, Boyer began

teaching himself to play à la Moerman. The result is this phenomenal tribute album and DVD.

Rewarding in two senses, it first pays homage to Moerman's compositions then brings them to

life for a new era. Second, it introduces Boyer and his band, Esmerald'Jazz.

Moerman began as a "mediocre guitarist" in his own self-effacing words, backing Sarane Ferret in 1959. After years

backing Matelo Ferret and jamming on occasion with the masterful Baro, Moerman launched his own trio. He recorded sporadically, usually playing his own melodies. His recordings were rarities, but the music stunning.

In later years, Moerman retired to his estate outside Paris, playing the odd jazz gig while writing operas. His age of Gypsy jazz was half-forgotten by modern young tyros more impressed by blazing virtuosity and seemingly unaware of the melodic beauty of the Ferrets and Moerman.

Esmerald'Jazz seeks to right this wrong. Antoine Boyer's solo guitar is backed by his father, Sébastien, on rhythm guitar, and string bassist Pierre Moreillon. The trio is simple and almost sparse in its sound. It's dedicated instead to quality of playing, in both Sébastien's arrangements and Antoine's delicate solos. In sum, the music they make is a fitting tribute.

The setlist includes 13 Moerman tunes. "Les temps des verdines" ("The Time of the Caravans") sounds like a time-machine back to an age of horsedrawn Gypsy caravans; the melody is reminiscent of the Eastern European charm of a Matelo Ferret Tziganskaia tune.

The standout — both in composition and rendition — is "Le chat matinal" (or "The Morning Cat"), which has a melody that slinks along like a cat seeking sunlight. And Boyer plays it with a sleek style, accelerating into a raucous jam. The DVD offers a rare visit with Moerman, who shares his music and recollections.

This is old-school Gypsy jazz, with an old master's works covered by a young master. — **Michael Dregni**



Esmerald'Jazz
The Strange World of Francis Moerman
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