



Season Two

Various Artists



Newvelle Records NV 007-012LP

Two years ago, when Newvelle embarked on its program of releasing newly recorded jazz on a subscription basis that required the buyer to buy a full year's subscription of six LPs, some thought it an act of marketing folly. After all, in 2016 despite vinyl's revival, the music streaming business was heading fast in the opposite direction. The trend to digital streaming continues today, but happily so does vinyl's impact... and Newvelle's upstream swim.

Having digested all of Season Two, it is clear that the spirit of the initial venture—outstanding music and packaging—have remained intact. Season Two opens with an LP of Brazilian music, acoustic and electric bass player John Patitucci's 'Irmãos de Fé', where John is joined by Yotam Silberstein playing acoustic and electric guitar and Rogério Boccato on drums and percussion. Next up is another guitar driven LP; *Hope* with Kevin Hays on Piano and Lionel Loueke on guitar, with both contributing vocals. Pianist and songwriter Jon Cowherd composed each song for his album *Gateway* with the quartet and session in mind. Blue Note artist Brian Blade accompanies him on drums, with Steve Cardneas on guitar, and Tony Scherr on bass. Listening to this LP (or any Newvelle Records piano recording), puts the lie to the adage that piano never sounds right on LPs because of the

turntable's inherent deficiencies. This is a remarkable grand piano recording, and the structured compositions at times bring to mind some Keith Jarrett mannerisms, some drone-like world music characteristics, all to the good.

The fourth release of the season, Chris Tordini's *Midnight Sun* features vocalist Becca Stevens accompanied by Tordini on bass and Greg Ruggiero on guitar. Stevens has been described as 'singular', which means that she doesn't sound like everybody else, and that's a really good thing. While not as 'singular' as, for example, Betty Carter or Jeanne Lee, Stevens' articulation and arrangements stand above the crowd in a way that holds interest to the point it seems an inconvenience to get up and flip the record.

The fifth LP in the season, *Cuban Nocturne*, by Aruán Ortiz, is a solo piano outing mixing Ortiz's compositions with those from several Cuban classical music giants. The final and untitled instalment is a piano trio led by bassist, composer, and educator Rufus Reed, who sports the deepest resumé on this season. With pianist Steve Allee, drummer Duduka Fonseca and the Sirius (string) Quartet, this is the most "modern" sounding entry in the season, one accentuated by an inventive mixture of classical and jazz influences.

Someone at Newvelle really likes piano and guitar, and the quality of the set is enhanced by the choice of these players. Each of the six LPs is impressive and warrants repeat listening. That's an imposing

average—new jazz recordings, even those with impressive pedigree and word of mouth more often than not stand less than a 50% chance of holding interest over the long term. Sometimes it's musical ennui, but more often the digital sound of most new releases makes them unlistenable. These recordings, made at East Side Studio in New York City and engineered by Mark Urselli using mostly vintage and tube microphones all satisfy on both grounds. They were recorded with ProTools HDX using an analogue mixdown console, and lacquers were cut from 24 bit 88.2kHz mixes, mastered at Masterdisk by Alex DeTurk. The 180-gram translucent vinyl makes the LPs stand out from the crowd.

Despite the use of Protools, which some über-purists are allergic to, Newvelle is arguably producing today's best sounding new jazz recordings. The piano sound is fabulous and the string tone is almost as good. The recordings seem to push the limits of bass sound. Listened to off-axis (or through a system that's set up wrong), and the bass can sound a little lush or bloomy. Sit in the sweet spot and everything falls into place. Newvelle deserves kudos for selecting great talents, recording them well, and delivering them in very handsome packages.

Visit newvelle-records.com for purchase details. **DD**

RECORDING
MUSIC

