



Mirage Ensemble *memory happens now*

Every artist - musician, painter, actor, author, dancer etc., modern or traditional - stands on the shoulders of somebody who was there before them. Even those that we recognize as giants within the various art forms will, at one time or other, have been under the spell of a brilliant predecessor, and will later have experienced a strong need to liberate themselves from this influence as part of developing a genuinely personal voice.

The six musicians in the Mirage Ensemble are in their mid-twenties, and «Memory Happens Now», their debut album, reflects this transitional, liberating process. The nine original compositions heard on this album are obviously played by a bunch of very skillful musicians, all of them well educated and equipped with a solid amount of knowledge of and respect for the rich American jazz tradition and its more recent European influences. But the music also radiates an urge for contributing to that tradition with innovating vitality and strength, adding yet another shade of colour to that ever-expanding palette that constitutes «jazz» in 2014. By the way they draw on different musical sources and integrate the various elements in their music, Mirage Ensemble is a true treat for listeners with a keen ear for new jazz experiences as well as for listeners who find pleasure in analyzing the playing of each musician, trying to discover whose musical shoulders each of them stands on.

Collaborative sounds of trumpet, trombone and saxophone are hardly new to jazz. But as always, the interplay decides whether the music will sound fresh or déjà écouté, and Magnus Drågen, Lars Sutterud and Joakim Bergsrønning definitely land in the first category. Blending with Marius

Igland's gentle, delicate guitar playing and the steady, colourful drive from Steinar Glas' bass and Jens Nyland's drums, they create the Mirage Ensemble's sound: Energetic, lyrical and maybe - at least to the ears of an international audience subscribing to the stereo-types of Scandinavia - with a trace of melancholy running through the melodies. Decide for yourself, what is heard as «melancholy» in one part of the world may be received as something quite different in other, but nowhere should it be contested that this music is very well played, with plenty of zest, feeling and mutual understanding.

As a band, Mirage Ensemble goes back to 2010 when the members, who come from six areas of Norway, met as jazz students at the University of Agder in the city of Kristiansand. Between then and now, the band has played a number of concerts in Norway and abroad, recorded for the Norwegian State Radio (NRK) and won the «Understreet 12» talent competition at the Canal Street Festival in Arendal, Norway. With «Memory Happens Now», Mirage Ensemble's steadily growing presence on the very lively Norwegian jazz scene is bound to reach a new level, and if the band's name, as of yet, is not part of the international jazz family's household language, who knows what the future will bring? Remember, memory happens now...

Marius Igland – guitar
Joakim Bergsrønning – saxophone
Magnus Drågen – trumpet
Lars Sutterud – trombone
Steinar Glas – bass
Jens Nyland – drums

Terje Mosnes, May 2014

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