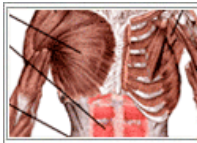
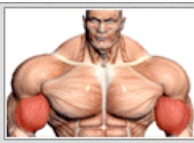


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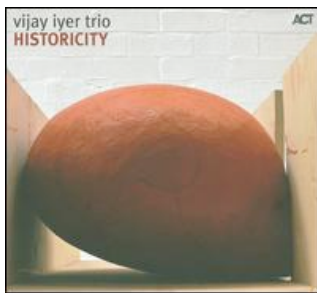
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Album
Historicity

Rating
★★★★☆

Release Date
Oct 13, 2009

Recording Date
Nov 3, 2008, Mar 31, 2009

Label
Act Music + Vision

Genre
Jazz

AMG Album ID
R 1646267

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Review

by Michael G. Nastos

Vijay Iyer has captured the ears of critics and listeners like only a handful of the most elite jazz pianists since [McCoy Tyner](#), [Cecil Taylor](#), or [Misha Mengelberg](#) initially burst onto the scene. There's no other single player who sounds even remotely like him, few who can match his inventive and whimsical sense of play or seriousness, and absolutely nobody who presents the stunning, highly intelligent music he dishes out. With *Historicity*, he touches on many different levels of acumen, influenced by contemporary alternative rock, Motown, show tunes, pop fusion, the early creative music of the '70s, and ethnic strains. Iyer also revisits two of his older compositions, with the majority of this progressive jazz -- whether "covers" or originals -- done completely in his own scintillating style. Iyer's working/touring band of drummer [Marcus Gilmore](#) and bassist [Stephan Crump](#) is more than up to the task, with this well-rehearsed music retaining a spontaneous, liquid, chameleonic urgency that consistently staggers the imagination. Iyer's mind-blowing virtuosity on the title track/opener is loaded with mutated repeat phrases that tumble from his brilliant, busy hands. Clearly, he is not like all the others. His love for [Andrew Hill](#) is demonstrated during "Smoke Stack," a scattershot, inventive, tangential swinger, while [Julius Hemphill](#)'s deeply bluesy and tribal "Dogon A.D." is perfectly interpreted in its thorny, craggy, unpredictable rhythmic base, as [Crump](#)'s bowed bass and [Gilmore](#)'s juggernaut funk stagger the mixed meters, very faithful to the original.

M.I.A. fans are treated to "Galang" in a hardbound big beat with summarily contrasting bright or dark piano lines, while [Stevie Wonder](#)'s "Big Brother" sports a tom-tom-fed New Orleans syncopation contrasting Iyer's strident piano. The suggestive, introspective original "Helix" is different for the pianist in a diffuse setting, and he conversely incorporates a circle-the-wagons approach on the romantic [Leonard Bernstein/Stephen Sondheim](#) evergreen "Somewhere," juxtaposed against a bluesy swing, again atypical. Perhaps the most unusual choice is R&B fusioner [Ronnie Foster](#)'s "Mystic Brew," a straight funky version, not at all smooth, but way cool. The recapitulated tracks include "Trident: 2010" in a roiling, nearly boiled motion, while "Segment for Sentiment #2" is magnificently spiritual, again a twist for Iyer's more animated notions. [Crump](#)'s bass playing and especially his soloing should be something to marvel at for anyone who appreciates finely crafted, artistic jazz musicianship, while [Gilmore](#) is amazing in his ability to keep up and push the more complex sounds. Vijay Iyer has mad skills, overwhelmingly and powerfully demonstrated on all of his recordings, but especially this one. He's also maturing at a rapid rate, while at the height of his powers on this incredible effort that sounds like much more than a mere piano-bass-drums mainstream jazz trio. This is an incredible CD, and a strong candidate for best jazz CD of 2009.

Tracks

Title	Composer	Time

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Limited Availability

1		Historicity	Iyer	07:50
2		Somewhere	Bernstein, Sondheim	06:57
3		Galang	Arulpragasam, Frischman ...	02:40
4		Helix	Iyer	04:00
5		Smoke Stack	Hill	08:09
6		Big Brother	Wonder	04:47
7		Dogon A.D.	Hemphill	09:19
8		Mystic Brew	Foster	04:56
9		Trident: 2010	Iyer	09:09
10		Segment for Sentiment #2	Iyer	04:03

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