

Featured Artist: Mads Tolling

CD Title: The Playmaker

Year: 2009

Record Label: Madsman Records

Style: Fusion

Review:



With his second CD, violinist Mads Tolling conveys the connection between music and sports along with bassist Stanley Clarke, pianist Russell Ferrante and vibist Stefon Harris lending their laudable wares on select tracks. Tolling equates the improvisational aspects of music to a support role. It's all about the teamwork, indeed. The Copenhagen-reared musician is currently a member of the renowned Turtle Island Quartet, but embarks upon a spirited jazz-fusion framework here.

The violinist fuses a radiant sound with edgy and sweet-toned phrasings amid some gritty soloing ventures. Shades of Mahavishnu Orchestra surface on "Star-maker (for John McLaughlin)" as the program contains memorably melodic themes and a hot and heavy jazz-rock cover of Led Zeppelin's classic "Black Dog." The album features a diverse track mix and is highlighted by Tolling's soaring staccato lines and unison parts with guitarist Mike Abraham on various works. Tolling occasionally turns up the heat with distortion techniques and imparts a pumping dub groove along with Stefon Harris' buoyant vibes during the fuzoid piece "The Risktaker (For LeBron James)."

Bass hero Stanley Clarke performs on "The Contemplator (for Zinedine Zidane)," then Tolling fuses a cheery Latin vibe atop George Ban-Weiss' thrusting electric bass patterns and Abraham's lyrical solo during "Loki in the Pokey." Variety is the spice of life, where the leader shifts the tide with a Danish folk song titled "I Skovens Dybe Stille Ro (for NHOP)." Overall, a wondrously balanced and stylish outing that sustains repeated listens. Tolling and his bandmates provide the requisite doses of improvisation within a set of hugely appealing and prismatic song-forms.

Artist's Website: <http://www.madstolling.com>

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