

and even channels McCoy Tyner on the sizzling closer, “Blues You Can Use.” With a set so firmly connected to the music’s history, Tetrptych shows that things needn’t be so new to be utterly engaging.

Hermon Mehari - Bleu

This debut has been a long time in the making. Trumpeter Hermon Mehari has been active for years on the Kansas City jazz scene, turning heads with the collective band Diverse and winning several major trumpet competitions. It is a good thing Mehari took his time, though. Not only is this debut an exciting, all-star affair, but it serves as an engaging conglomeration of the various projects Mehari has led and taken part in over his still-young career. To be sure, there are a fair share of **pieces** that, while pleasant, are more successful as vehicles for improvisation than as captivating compositions. But the improvisation is always engaging, and there are forays into standard repertoire (like a frantic take on Coltrane’s “Moment’s Notice”) and modern pop. The latter is especially interesting, with Mehari covering the singer-songwriter Nick Hakim’s “Cold” with vocalist Kevin Johnson. The slow-burning R&B feel on this track lies somewhere between Robert Glasper and straight hip-hop, and while it is a bit of an outlier on the album, bits of R&B influence seep everywhere. Electronic vibes and overdriven rhodes are all over “Tatra,” for instance, and they are played tastefully by vibraphonist Peter Schlamb and pianist Aaron Parks. The horns are equally captivating: Mehari is as influenced by Kenny Garrett as he is by Freddie Hubbard, and his angular lines consistently take the unexpected route. Saxophonist Logan Richardson, meanwhile, shows why he has become a top-call player in modern jazz circles: his monstrous technique is undeniable, but he also possesses a velvety tone and can play quite expressively when called upon to do so. But this is Mehari’s project, and it shows him to be a confident, inventive voice. A late-album highlight is a duo take on “I’ve Grown Accustomed to Her Face,” with the ever-tasteful Parks masterfully accompanying Mehari’s gospeltinged interpretation.



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