



Neo-Modernism - Either/Orchestra
Chris Gardner
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Accurate Records 3284

The newest release from the Either/Orchestra, a ten-piece jazz ensemble from Boston, looks to the masters of modern jazz for inspiration. The group consciously draws from Coltrane, Monk, Mingus, Shorter, and the later, more electrified flights of Miles Davis. The results bear the stamp of the greats in more ways than one. One can't help but hear the "Trane's echo in Russ Gershon's soprano sax work on "Los Olvidados" or the decidedly Monkish board work from Gregory Burk on "Baby Does Monk," but mimicry only gets one so far. Ask any of those folks who spent years searching for Bird's sound how far it got them. The tougher trick is to capture the heart and spirit of the music, and this group knows it.

"The Modernist" reeks of Mingus in the best way (I'm thinking particularly of *Blues and Roots* here). The foot-stompin', hand-clappin' swagger that filled the room during Mingus classic sessions whispers through this track, infusing it with a breath of Mingusian mojo. "Heavily Amplified Hairpiece" similarly conjures the intrepid cosmic flights of *Bitches Brew* by casting unmanned, electrified sounds outward and waiting for the rebound.

In final analysis, the disc never perfectly captures the grit and grandeur of the great sessions (after all, what does?), but the approach has merit. Bandleader and principal composer Russ Gershon seems to understand that imitation is suicide. In the album's best moments, the group mimics the approach rather than the sound. It is not a matter of playing the same thing, but exploring in the same way, launching from the same place. The finished product is challenging, exploratory, occasionally unsettling, and often eye-popping – a fitting tribute to the men chosen as inspiration.

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