



Chicago Yestet *Just Say Yes*

TIDDLYWINKS MUSIC 081862

★★★½

This ambitious 13-piece big band-with-a-conscience led by producer/arranger/composer/trombonist Joel Adams follows up its 2008 debut *Jazz Is Politics?* with a title that seems more capitulatory than combative—however, not in respect of Adams’ highly detailed, forceful charts.

The band oozes with crafty pros and mighty soloists, plus smoldery singer Maggie Burrell and spoken word artist Rob Dz. The latter two inevitably dominate this session. “In The Here And Now” riffs on “Fakebook friends” and the social media paradigm shift. Burrell’s lyrics are darkly confessional, not glib postings, and “Thursday Night Blues” is an unsettling update of “Don’t Explain.” Her melancholy vocals, with rich coffee flavor reminiscent of Oleta Adams or Roberta Flack, dwell on the struggle and compromise of societal and personal progress, or lack thereof.

Dz shares weary languor on his extrapolations from “The Long And Winding Road.” His voice has a fascinating timbre that makes you want to listen, though the Bacharach mash-up on “What The World Needs Now Is Disco” is somewhat gratuitous and oddly anachronistic despite the swaggering score.

Rousing and metrically hip, the opener “In The Here And Now” is driven hard by the stellar rhythm section of drummer Dana Hall, bassist Clark Sommers and pianist Ryan Cohan and boasts the leader’s sole solo—a deliciously buttery volley, preferencing tone and timing above superfluous note-play. Geof Bradfield’s tenor follows, hurling color between every detail. Elsewhere he is matched with taught, burly forays from section mate Scott Burns. Another important member of the ensemble is classy trombonist Tom Garling, and listen for fine, committed contributions from Cohan, saxophonist Dan Nicholson and guitarist Jeff Parker.

—Michael Jackson

Just Say Yes: In The Here And Now; Uncommon Ground; What Was Ours; The 7th Dwarf; Glass Half Empty; The Long And Winding Road; Thursday Night Blues; What The World Needs Now Is Disco. (59:09)

Personnel: Dan Nicholson, alto saxophone; Scott Burns, Geof Bradfield, tenor saxophone; Marques Carroll, Victor Garcia, trumpet; Tom Garling, Joel Adams, trombone; Jeff Parker, guitar; Ryan Cohan, piano; Clark Sommers, bass; Dana Hall, drums; Maggie Burrell, vocals; Rob Dz, spoken word.

Ordering info: chicagoyestet.com