



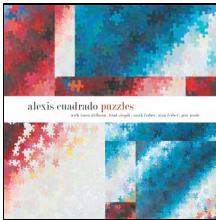
World Premiere Concert of Ground-Breaking Album

Review Courtesy AllAboutJazz.com

Brooklyn Jazz Underground: Puzzles & Best of the West and Many Places

Brooklyn Jazz Underground | Brooklyn Jazz Underground Records

By [Donald Elfman](#)



Alexis Cuadrado
Puzzles
[BJU Records](#)
2007



Anne Mette Iversen
Best of the West + Many Places
[BJU Records](#)
2007

Brooklyn continues to be a beautifully complementary alternative to the New York scene. The music that comes out of this borough is bold and audacious yet also eminently listenable and highly engaging. The independent artist-run Brooklyn Jazz Underground (BJU) label has as its stated goal the production of “creative and adventurous contemporary improvised music” on “quality recordings that define the shape of today's jazz.” Here are two fine examples of that aesthetic.

Alexis Cuadrado is a talented bassist and composer who is the co-founder of the BJU label. He shows himself on *Puzzles* to be a talented soloist who also knows how to write music that calls forth a group spirit as well as the notion of individual voices. And he does so with a sense of the possibilities inherent in a wide swath of American music.

The feeling hits you right out of the box as “Bright Lights” comes at us with a kind of pop/island feel. The ever-appealing Loren Stillman plays the main theme on the soprano with a pure, clear tone that calls the listener both to dance and listen. Each of the players follows with concisely expressive solo statements--guitarist Brad Shepik wailing 'fuzzily,' the leader smartly getting down, Stillman once again displaying a funky intelligence in a lovely solo that leads back to the opening theme. The compositions have all the feel of a classic approach with some new avenues subtly explored. There are grooves galore here, some beautiful abstraction and some good old-fashioned Blue Note-like tunes.

The other leader/composer here is also a bassist. Anne Mette Iversen has a background in jazz and classical composition and so the first part of her two-disc set *Best of the West + Many Places* is laid out like a classical work and the sound of the group--the leader with John Ellis (tenor and soprano saxophones), Danny Grissett (piano) and Otis Brown III (drums)--is augmented by a string quartet that adds color and some truly intriguing textures. The strings are never just there to play under the jazz group; it's a vital voice on its own that never sounds out of place in a jazz context. The whole disc is a suite and thus there's a progression of ideas. None of the eight players calls attention to themselves yet each has an important role to

play in the overall direction of the music.

The second disc in the set collects music written over the course of the three years in the Iversen group's recording history. This is a more standard jazz quartet album with every player given a shot to burn and shine. The first tune--"Cataldo One"--is a powerfully appealing example of the composer's way with a tune and just how well her players absorb her lessons and make music that moves them forward.

Tracks and Personnel

Puzzles

Tracks: Bright Light; Levittation; Quintessential; Abstract Rhythm; B&W Pop; Canon; 8 and 1/2; Tango; East 10th Shuffle.

Personnel: Alexis Cuadrado: bass; Loren Stillman: saxophone; Brad Shepik: guitar; Mark ferber: drums; Alan Ferber: trombone; Pete Rende: organ.

Best of the West + Many Places

Tracks: North; South; West; North; North West; North East Cataldo One; Cataldo Ballad; Out of the Atlantic; Many Places; Sambavian; Milo Man; 2004; The Square in Ravello; Pjerrot's Smile.

Personnel: Anne Mette Iversen: bass; John Ellis: tenor and soprano saxophones; Danny Grissett: piano; Otis Brown III: drums; Tine Rudolph, Sarah McClelland Jacobsen: violins; Anne Lindeskov: viola; Mats Larsson: cello.

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