



Dayna Stephens/ Anthony Fung *Pluto Juice*

CONTAGIOUS MUSIC

★★★★½

At 53½ minutes, *Pluto Juice* is a journey. Dayna Stephens in his continuing explorations with the Akai Electronic Wind Instrument is finding new paths to explore and taking his sweet time getting there. Alongside drummer Anthony Fung's exuberant keeping of the beat, this quartet quite adeptly makes this music boldly and courageously, like the next generation of fusion. Andrew Marzotto is a guitar-

ist worthy of your attention and certainly grabs it throughout the album, especially his lively solo on "Outskirts Of Neptune" or the penultimate track, "Approaching Pluto," with an easy groove that rises to unexpected heights.

Opener "Welcome To Our Snow Globe" is the perfect encapsulation of the album — well spaced for a chance to showcase the entire quartet, Stephens embracing the full potential (and weirdness) of the EWI, Anthony Fung making the best of every possible drum fill, and that paradoxical sense that this feels familiarly like nothing one has heard before. The only song on the album that features Stephens on the familiar soprano saxophone is "Roly Poly Universe," which feels like an anchor for every song surrounding it.

While the execution of this material is exquisite, revolving the bulk of the music around the EWI is a big pill to swallow. The rest of the quartet is the spoonful of sugar that helps this medicine go down, but one still can't ignore the fact that it's medicine, that being futuristic also literally means being ahead of the present time.

—Anthony Dean-Harris

Pluto Juice: Welcome To Our Snow Globe; Pluto And Beyond; Outskirts Of Neptune; Roly Poly Universe; Trial On Mars; Zoomed Out; Green Gargantua; Approaching Pluto; Lies That Tell The Truth. (53:34)

Personnel: Dayna Stephens, EWI, soprano saxophone; Andrew Marzotto, guitar; Rich Brown, electric bass; Anthony Fung, drums.

Ordering info: daynastephens.bandcamp.com



Dahveed Behroozi *Echoes*

SUNNYSIDE RECORDS

★★★★½

Classically trained pianist Dahveed Behroozi was already playing jazz professionally as a high school student from Heyward, California (often with a young bassist named Thomas Morgan). His training continued in New York with Fred Hersch before returning to his classical roots as a graduate student mentored by Ursula Oppens.

This diametrical journey between the twin pillars of jazz and classical music has left Behroozi in an apparent desire not to go anywhere further too quickly. His sophomore trio offering, *Echoes*, is stately in its chamber-music aesthetic, and leisurely in its contentedness to savor the many colors and textures the players engage in with solemn, expressive purpose. The pianist is accompanied by his high school buddy Morgan, who has since risen to the top ranks of New York jazz bassists, and Billy Mintz, who has occupied that space on drums in rarified stasis for decades. They remain remarkably focused throughout the concise, nine-track album, moving lightly within the heavily improvised vehicles.

A slowly formed narrative appears in each episodic piece. There is retrospection between two different occurrences of "Chimes," the second immediately more insistent and urgent. Some drama happens in "Gilroy," as a series of repeated chord cycles are eventually interrupted by a gentle flourish of scalar activity. "Sendoff" is an extreme departure from the album's otherwise serene demeanor — a bruising and ultimately triumphant sonic avalanche. The liveliest piece is "Tricks," a blues-inspired vignette removed from any formal harmonic shackles, allowing Behroozi to finally hint at his impressive pianistic capabilities. —Gary Fukushima

Echoes: Imagery; Chimes; Gilroy; Alliteration; Sendoff; Royal Star; Chimes (variation); Tricks; TDB. (44:27)

Personnel: Dahveed Behroozi, piano; Thomas Morgan, bass; Billy Mintz, drums.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



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