



DEPT. OF GOOD AND EVIL FEATURING RACHEL Z

Savoy Jazz

Review by Michael G. Nastos

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In the sense that democracy in bands still exists, the Dept. of Good and Evil is ostensibly the trio of pianist Rachel Z. Though bassist Maeve Royce and drummer/producer Bobbie Rae have heavy hands in making the music happen, it is the voice of Z that is front and center. **Her playing in and of itself is good as gold, with a sense of purpose, resolve, melodic common sense, and daring nuances. In short, her sound is truly beautiful.**

Z plays no electric keyboards whatsoever, as she has in past recordings. This allows her orchestral concept to blossom fully. Occasionally some light funk or a Sting or Stevie Wonder tune creeps in, and the ethereal quality of her previous employer, Peter Gabriel, is extant. Mostly though, Z deals best in modalities, as on the outstanding version of Joe Henderson's "Inner Urge," a wry 5/4-based "Soul Meets Body," the lovely waltz time "Milky Way," and the 7/8 Chick Corea-like bounce that infuses the Miles Davis evergreen "E.S.P." A lengthy "Saint of New Orleans" is varied in dimension and stance but not as fully developed as it probably is in live performance. The clichéd trumpeting of Erik Naslund may lower the standard of this music on his occasional features, but cameo appearances by electric bass guitar master Tony Levin spark the tracks he is on.

Rachel Z is very capable of a magnum opus, and though her tribute to Wayne Shorter, On the Milky Way Express, came very close, that zenith is still within her grasp and eagerly awaited. The sheer talent she possesses is clearly there, and quite evident on this effort.

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