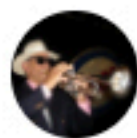


Gianni Bardaro / Pierluigi Villani: Unfolding Routes



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5,431 Views



The monochromatic cover of *Unfolding Routes* depicts an iconic—and stark—image of a deserted highway leading to an infinite horizon. It's perspective: an integral component of art. This collaboration of two outstanding Italian musicians is no dimensional illusion but, rather, an intelligent and involving artistic journey.



Bardaro, Italian-born but now residing in Copenhagen, is a highly gifted alto saxophonist. He possesses both a beautifully haunting, poetic voice ("Unfolding Hearts") as well as fine technical chops, leveraging both heavily throughout. Choosing to incorporate freer forms of musical expression, his resonant sound intrigues rather than repels. His improvisational style speaks of statement and logical embellishment. Ideas are examined and expanded with superb rhythmic and melodic flair.

The material ranges from "statement" fare such as the opening and closing sax/percussion duets ("Glimmer," "Gateway"), to the elegant ("Shifting Route") and the hip ("Boppel"). There are even some quasi-rock platforms ("Free Falling Verve," "Signs of Light," "Four Ways to the Exit"). All ten selections are interesting originals by way of either Bardaro or co-composed with drummer Pierluigi Villani.

Bardaro, with one exception, shies away from unnecessary saxophone embellishments such as double tones, squeals and squawks; he's simply too good a creator on his own to have to do so. His duo with Villani ("Gateway") ends the session on a rhythmic fifteenth round with the drummer's frantic kit work—and shrewdly, like that infinite horizon, without melodic resolution.

Co-leader Villani extracts the musical most out of his drums and cymbals. He's a highly energetic, involved player, beautifully supporting and negotiating with Bardaro. Bassist Andreas Hatholt has a gorgeous sound and drive, while percussionist Yohan Ramon shines when involved.

Rest assured, *Unfolding Routes* is an acquired aural taste. However, it's a robust ride of intelligence, beauty and energy. Hitchhiking is recommended.