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Reviews

Masterpiece ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★ Good ★★★ Fair ★★ Poor ★

Chris Potter 10

Song For Anyone

»

SUNNYSIDE 3074

★★★★

Chris Potter Underground

*Follow The Red
Line, Live At The
Village Vanguard*

SUNNYSIDE 3075

★★★★



Recording *Song*

For Anyone, perhaps Chris Potter took heed of Joe Lovano's Third Stream experiments with Gunther Schuller on *Rush Hour*. Regardless, you could be forgiven for mistaking Potter's gravelly vibrato on the opening "The Absence" for Lovano's tenor.

However, there's no doubting this project is Potter's baby, as the saxophonist composed and arranged all 10 cuts for this tentet date. He even contributed the watercolor cover art. The ee cummings connection (the title is taken from a cummings poem) could be enlarged upon in the liners, and no doubt extrapolations about punctuation (or lack thereof) and syntax can be drawn from Potter's garrulous, unstoppable style.

A Paganini factor emerges with Potter, in that nothing seems beyond his grasp. But the delights here are that some of the settings temper his power-drill intensity and offer light and shade. Some favorite moments include the transition midway through "Chief Seattle" when the pizzicato groove opens up to Mark Feldman's bluesy, Middle Eastern-tinged violin and where delicious call-and-response passages between woodwind and strings up the ante before the rallentando on the title cut.

"Train" on *Follow The Red Line* starts like a considered, classically inspired composition from *Song For Anyone* and then starts to crank, presumably like the wheels of a locomotive. And does it smoke. Potter practically blows the gasket before a timely, if overdramatic release

into bulbous ruminations from Adam Rogers' guitar (which organically build into a pressure-cooked shred).

Potter has so many improvisatory options at his disposal: Which mind-blowing lick from what harmonic direction shall he pull next from the snakecharmer's bag? A fusion, high-tech vibe to some of the compositions on *Follow The Red Line*

(such as the Weather Report-flavored "Viva Las Vilnius") are endorsed by Craig Taborn's bass-compensating Fender Rhodes. The buzzy low-fi attitude imparted by the Rhodes adds filth and tips the otherwise "so what" head of "Arjuna" into a stonking ostinato-laden excursion, kicked on by whipcracking rim shots from Nate Smith.

Potter toys with a little turn embellishment in his solo with a level of dexterity no other saxophone player on the block could come close to. Late on the CD he gets into textural scree mode with as much intensity as the most committed free blower. The question for the listener is: Can you keep up with Potter's indefatigably spiraling thread of logic? Seek respite in the bass clarinet balladry of "Zea" and Potter's acquiescence to Taborn on the superbly stewed, reverberant jungle groove of Ed Blackwell's "Togo." —Michael Jackson

Song For Anyone: The Absence; Against The Wind; Closer To The Sun; Family Tree; Chief Seattle; Cupid And Psyche; Song For Anyone; The Arc Of A Day; Estrellas Del Sur; All By All. (72:58)

Personnel: Chris Potter, tenor, soprano saxophone; Erica Von Kleist, flute; Greg Tardy, clarinet; Michael Rabinowitz, bassoon; Mark Feldman, violin; Lois Martin, viola; David Eggar, cello; Steve Cardenas, guitar; Scott Colley, bass; Adam Cruz, drums, percussion.

Follow The Red Line: Train; Arjuna; Pop Tune #1; Viva Las Vilnius; Zea; Togo. (75:21)

Personnel: Potter, tenor saxophone; Craig Taborn, Fender Rhodes; Adam Rogers, guitar; Nate Smith, drums.

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