



Michel Nirenberg *Retrato/Portrait* (2015)



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It only takes a few seconds of listening to "Chorinho Em Aldeia/Na Gloria"—the album-opening track on *Retrato/Self Portrait*—to realize there's something special about Michel Nirenberg's playing. This young multi-reedist—a native of Rio de Janeiro who's currently based in Washington D.C.—marries virtuosity, exuberance, and emotional depth in his work, confidently covering everything from choro to cha-cha and swing music to samba on this, his debut album.

The aforementioned "Chorinho Em Aldeia/Na Gloria" kicks things off in sprightly fashion. Nirenberg's high-spirited horn work leads the charge and shouting vocals help to create a party atmosphere. "A Deux," which finds Nirenberg in a duo setting with pianist Alex Brown, proves to be the perfect followup. This particular instrumental pairing and the song's style- morphing nature, moving from Argentinian environs to cha-cha to straight-up swing, provide great contrast to the opener. And contrast comes to be Nirenberg's calling card as the album plays out. With "Forro From The South" he explores a popular style of music from Northeast Brazil, on the ballad "Beatriz" he bears his soul, "Caravan" comes with a metric alteration and partido alto and samba rhythms, and "Desvairada"—a solo saxophone performance—finds Nirenberg flying high without a safety net. Add to that the attractively crestfallen "Lonely," a buoyant take on Jacob do Bandolim's "Santa Morena," and several other winners, and then you start to see the full scope of this young man's talents.

The core ensemble on this project includes a crop of players equally well-versed in the different styles of music that Nirenberg swims through. Leonardo Lucini's solid electric bass work is supportive and springy, drummer Alejandro Lucini adds some pep to the proceedings and provides some subtle touches when the music is more subdued in nature, and Dani Cortaza's guitar work is unobtrusive yet essential. Brown and several one-shot guests help to alter the sonic landscape from time to time, leaving Nirenberg's horns to tie things together.

Across these eleven tracks there are highs and lows, daring displays, and lessons on less-is- more playing. In terms of style, substance, and execution, Nirenberg ranks high. This is some brilliant Brazilian jazz.

Track Listing: Chorinho Em Aldeia/Na Gloria; A Deux; Forro From The South; Beatriz;Caravan; Menina De Avental; Lonely;Samba Da Virginia; Santa Moreno; Bonus Track; Forro From The South 2.

Personnel: Michel Nirenberg: saxophones, clarinet, vocals (1); Dani Cortaza: guitars; Alejandro Lucini: drums, percussion; Leonardo Lucini: bass; Alex Brown: piano (2, 4, 5, 8); Bruno Lucini: percussion (3); Rogerio Souza: guitar (9); Julia Teixeira: vocals (1); Daniel Gralewski: vocals (1).

Record Label: Self Produced

Style: Brazilian

<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/retrato-portrait-michel-nirenberg-self-produced-review-by-dan-bilawsky.php>