

DOWNBEAT

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Reviews

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

Jentsch Group Large

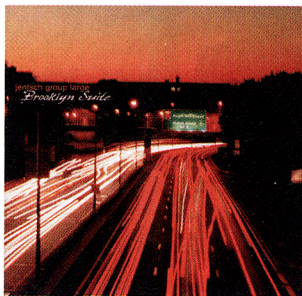
Brooklyn Suite

FLEUR DE SON CLASSICS 57987

★★★½

Guitarist Chris Jentsch leads a pianoless 16-piece orchestra in a session that should find a place of choice in the catalog of works for large ensemble. The seven-part “Brooklyn Suite” occupies most of the album, which also features two separate pieces—the bouncy “See You In Bali” and the reggae-tinged, anthem-like “Our Daily Dread,” which showcases the leader’s rock-inflected side.

Commissioned by the American Composers Forum, the suite has more of a pastoral quality than an urban patina. Its central piece, “Follow That Cab,” is a real gem. The title can be misleading because the music hardly suggests a



chase. Jentsch created a contrasted and kaleidoscopic patchwork with marvelous melodies, splendid voicings and a skillful use of dynamics. The other parts do not reach such heights, but they do not disappoint.

The music benefits from the stellar cast Jentsch assembled. The gorgeous plaint of Dan Willis’ tenor sax on “Outside Line” or the up-and-down ruminations of Russ Johnson’s trumpet on “Imagining The Mirror” bring another dimension to these already creative compositions. The leader is not left behind. He can produce vertiginous lines or eerie atmospheres, and his motifs often help anchor the proceedings.

—Alain Drouot

Brooklyn Suite: Opening Shards; Inside (Interlude); Outside Line; Going To Hail; Follow That Cab; Imagining The Mirror; Closing Shards; See You In Bali; Our Daily Dread. (60:57)

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