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Vijay Iyer Trio, 'Historicity'

October 19, 2009

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JAZZ

Vijay Iyer Trio Historicity

Act

ESSENTIAL "Galang"

Pianist Vijay Iyer has reached the point where aficionados spar over favorite works: the raw, scorching duets with saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa? The abstract, avant-garde Fieldwork project with Steve Lehman and Tyshawn Sorey? The large-group, multimedia pieces with spoken poet Mike Ladd? As the buzz about him grows, Iyer now offers a classic piano trio album - his first - and it's a perfect point of introduction to one of the most challenging and satisfying talents in jazz today. "Historicity" brims with Iyer's signature method and tone: spectral, spacious, with exquisite use of rhythmic repetitions that lurk in the background and serve as points of departure. With Stephan Crump on bass and Marcus Gilmore on drums, the trio is tightly meshed, a cooperative organism that works on instinct rather than individual exchange. Iyer is known as a composer, but more than half the program here addresses the works of others. But where Iyer, whom fans like to call cerebral and edgy, goes out on a limb is on the chestnut "Somewhere," from "West Side Story" - mining middlebrow fare with respect, not irony, to reveal riches previously unexplored. It confirms a core message in Iyer's body of work, that all creation bears interpreting. (Out now)

SIDDHARTHA MITTER ■

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