

DOWNBEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

Since 1934



Willie Jones

Volume III

WJ3 1005

★★★½

Pete Zimmer Quintet

Judgment

TIPPIN 1103

★★★½

Artist-owned independent labels, once a rarity in jazz, are proliferating. And the music found on some indies, not surprisingly, is as vital and creative as anything found on the name brands. Case(s) in point: The third releases from each of two New York drummers making uncompromising post-bop jazz.

Willie Jones III, lately on tour with the likes of Kurt Elling and Eric Reed, leads two trios—plus guitarist Shanti Mathews on one track—through fresh arrangements of familiar tunes on *Volume III*. Jones, pianist Willie Jones II (the leader's father) and bassist Mike Elizondo elongate the melody to great effect on a shimmering "Here's That Rainy Day" and, with Mathews, add dramatic color to the ballad "I Heard A Forest Praying."

Jones, Reed and bassist Dwayne Burno, heard on the other six tracks, similarly give new life to several pieces, including a shimmering version of Dizzy Gillespie's "Con Alma"; a brisk, hard-driving stroll through McCoy Tyner's "Inception"; and Quincy Jones' mid-tempo "Wail Bait," which opens up for brief but fruitful solos by Jones and Burno.

For *Judgment*, Zimmer mixes and matches with a group of high-caliber players including underappreciated Boston tenor saxophonist George Garzone, the drummer's mentor at New England Conservatory. Garzone's bluesy "The Mingus That I Knew" opens with a display of the sophisticated flexibility of the rhythm section, with Zimmer, bassist John Sullivan and pianist Toru Dodo double-timing on a dime, and the inspired pairing of Garzone and fellow tenor man Joel Frahm. Both saxophonists dig in deep on "Mingus," as well as Zimmer's title track and Garzone's bossa-rooted "Tutti Italiani."

Judgment is packed with memorable pieces, including a pair of edgy, show-stopping duo numbers, with Garzone and Zimmer sparring like they'd been doing so forever on "Bye Bye Blackbird" and their moody, sprawling "8 a.m. Wednesday Spirit." "Cut Off" is a Jazz Messenger-style tune featuring engaging turns by Frahm, trumpeter Michael Rodriguez, Dodo and Zimmer that leaves listeners wanting more.

—Philip Booth

Volume III: Shoulders; Here's That Rainy Day; The First Man; Con Alma; Inception; I Heard A Forest Praying; Wail Bait; He

Looked Beyond My Faults; H3.27

Personnel: Willie Jones III, drums; Eric Reed, piano (1, 3-6, 7-8); Dwayne Burno, bass (1, 3-6, 7-8); Willie Jones II, piano (2, 6); Mike Elizondo, bass (2, 6); Shanti Mathews, guitar (8).

Ordering info: williejoness3.com

Judgment: The Mingus That I Knew; Down Or Up; To My Papa; 8 a.m. Wednesday Spirit; Judgment; Dot Dot; Bye Bye Blackbird; Tutti Italiani; Cut Off. (68:53)

Personnel: Pete Zimmer, drums; George Garzone, tenor saxophone (1, 3-6, 7-8); Michael Rodriguez, trumpet (2, 6, 8); Joel Frahm (1-2, 5-6, 8-9), tenor saxophone; Toru Dodo, piano (1-3, 5-8, 9-9); John Sullivan (1, 3, 5, 6); David Wong (2, 4, 9), bass.

Ordering info: tippinrecords.com