

Issi Rozen

Dark Beauty

NEW STEP MUSIC 03101

★★★½

Mark Kleinhaut Trio with Bobby Watson

A Balance Of Light ▶

INVISIBLE MUSIC 2031

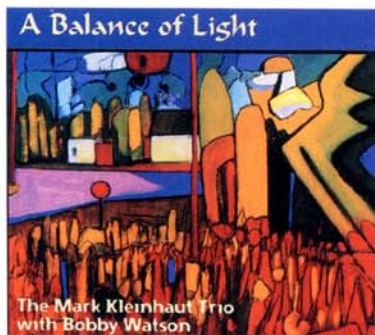
★★★

While many instrumentalists speak of the development of their personal style in terms of colors and hues, most guitarists almost instinctively describe themselves in a language of contrasts. Though the distinction is slight, there is an innate and subtle difference between these two perspectives. On Israel-born guitarist Issi Rozen's *Dark Beauty*, such seemingly academic distinctions gain a life of their own. As an established veteran of the Boston scene known for his chameleon-like ability to comfortably shift between Latin, blues, jazz and his own immediate Middle Eastern influences, Rozen's approach is an amalgam of diverse aesthetics held together by technical facility and a sense of conceptual clarity.

Among the disc's 10 tracks, eight are Rozen's originals that reflect his penchant for contrast, but not necessarily as a description of the difference between the disc's cuts. Instead his compositions are detailed personal journeys that individually twist and turn on the whims of his shifting mood. While "Ramat Gan" hinges on the balance between dark modalities and interjections of bright and playful gestures, a perfect complement to the guitarist's dark tone and crisp fretwork, *Dark Beauty*'s lone standard—Charlie Parker's "Segment"—strikes a comfortable pose among its companions on the disc as Rozen and his compatriots give it the same thorough consideration.

While Rozen prefers playing within shadows, fellow guitarist Mark Kleinhaut finds himself at home on the brighter end of the spectrum. Though *A Balance Of Light* represents Kleinhaut's third trio foray and his fourth overall release, it's clear from the outset that this disc is less about his personal playing and leans more toward featuring the guitarist as a composer. The lead honors are placed solely on the capable shoulders of alto saxophonist Bobby Watson.

From the opening cadenza of "Four Lane Clover" to the freeform eclecticism of "Summers," Watson finds an immediate niche in each of Kleinhaut's compositions, blending his impressive ability for drawing out every last breath of inspiration from each chorus with technical prowess. When Watson and Kleinhaut find the fruitful mid-



dle ground of matching their styles, heard on tracks like the seductive ballad "Erikita" and the contented standard time feel of "South Of Mason," these two strike a real sense of

balance without sacrificing the spectrum of

contrast created by their personalities.

—John Kreicbergs

Dark Beauty: Sheharhoret; Ramat Gan; Dreamland; Segment; Spring; Maya's Blues; Spirits; Sixteen; Inspiration; Geshem. (71:21)

Personnel: Issi Rozen, guitar; Gilad Barkan, piano; Thomson Kneeland, bass; Harvey Wirht, drums.

Ordering Info: www.newstepmusic.com

A Balance Of Light: Ferdinand And Isabelle; Long Look Back; Four Lane Clover; South Of Mason; Field Of Greens; Start It Up; Erikita; Summers. (68:51)

Personnel: Mark Kleinhaut, guitar; Bobby Watson, alto saxophone; Jim Lyden, bass; Les Harris Jr., drums.

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