

Matthias Lupri

Reviews

SHADOW OF THE VIBE



"One doesn't have to be familiar with such classic Blue Note freebop LPs as Eric Dolphy's **Out To Lunch**, Andrew Hill's **Point of Departure**, or Bobby Hutcherson's "Happenings," but these are three important frames of reference for Matthias Lupri's excellent new disc, **Shadow of the Vibe**. The vibist-composer Lupri was born in Germany in 1964, right about the time the aforementioned recordings were made. Raised in Kansas and Alberta, Canada, he began as a rock-blues-country drummer before getting a late start --during his early 20s on the vibraphone. He's more than made up for lost time.

"At Berklee Lupri's teacher was Gary Burton, master of an almost impossibly-clean four-mallet technique, but to his credit, he has absorbed much of his mentor's vast resources of musical knowledge without being imitative of him. Only on the shimmering, nocturnal solo piece "Intrusion" (Lupri wrote nine of the set's 11 compositions) is Burton's influence palpable.

"Some of Lupri's originals are, to borrow the title of an album issued in 1960 under the supervision of John Lewis/Gunther Schuller, jazz abstractions. The themes are economical, launching a host of fresh sounding solos both vigorous and pensive, depending, of course, on their settings, by the leader and the Fringe's George Garzone, a most valuable (if occasionally voluble) player on tenor and soprano saxophones. (Additional Blue Note homage: "Augie's Blues" is a nifty, updated paraphrase of Lee Morgan's all-time boogaloo groover, "The Sidewinder.") The malleable rhythms are courtesy of the bassist John Lockwood, Garzone's Fringe bandmate, and the Dutch-born, Berklee-educated drummer Sebastiaan de Krom."
James Isaacs - bostoncitysearch.com

"It's a happy struggle." That is, to be in "the shadow of the vibe," says Matthias Lupri, a Berklee College graduate who finally gave in to the call of the vibraphone after drumming for fifteen years and two-timing with jazz (in his hotel room) on the blues, rock and country bands of his early years. This, the vibist's second album as leader, seems to have blatantly turned its back on that other life of Lupri's.

"With special guest George Garzone, whose saxophone can buzz and flit through semitones and the breeze of the vibes, the deliberate exclusion of piano or guitar is barely noticeable. And it is precisely this instrumental configuration that excites Lupri. "I love playing with sax and no other comping instrument. It gives you more freedom, and without the richer piano sound the timbre of sax and vibes together tends to float more." To float, in the case of *Shadow Of The Vibe*, is to create atmosphere: the rich echo of the vibraphone, the wispy rolls of the saxophone and the busy-but-quiet rhythm section.

"Mirror" is tentative and "Intrusion" is pensive. "Moonlamps" skips with a super-light touch and "Augie's Blues" picks up with just the right amount of cool attitude to celebrate the memory of the late uptown club. But it's the title track itself that plays on Lupri's intrinsic approach to jazz: "When you play the vibes, you never know if the instrument is following you or if you're following the instrument. I can't escape the vibes; but do I want to? It's an endless struggle, to master jazz as well as your instrument." But again, "it's a happy struggle."
52ndstreetreview.com

"Matthias, a brilliant vibist in the Gary Burton style, has a great ability to float through his solos with ease. He is favorably assisted by Lockwood and De Krom throughout. This is an enjoyable slice of advanced modern Jazz. *Al Merritt UK Jazz, London England*

"Matthias Lupri is doing his share to bring the vibraphone out from the shadows of jazz. The German-born, Berklee-trained performer takes another step in that direction with his second CD. Lupri's combo features a sax - George Garzone - rather than less pronounced piano or guitar. Lupri immediately displays his range as a composer over three superior opening tracks. "Investion" winds up with rhythmic epiphanies topped with pithy lyrical soprano playing by Garzone, who interpolates "The Look of Love" within his familiar style of quoting. Lupri takes his own lithe, spiraling turn there, but establishes more tonal presence in his snaking ballad "Mirror," shadowing Garzone's tenor with full, ringing responses. And "Fast Corners" veers the other way, swinging with abrupt changes and fierce solos over bassist John Lockwood's fast gait and drummer Sebastiaan de Krom's sharply attuned breaks. From the inquisitive lolls of "Miles Through You" to the jaunty shuffle "Augies Blues," Lupri keeps the vibes rolling within an ensemble context that honors his seductive sweep. *Paul Robicheau - Boston Globe*

"German born vibraphonist Matthias Lupri emerges as another musician living up to his considerable potential on *Shadow of the Vibe* (Chartmaker Jazz CMG5060), his sophomore effort. Lupri studied with Gary Burton at Berklee, and you can hear the result of that mentorship in the rolling topography of his solos, in the voicing of his chords, and even in some of his specific phrasemaking. When he employs a certain full-keyboard arpeggio to introduce "Investion," the opening track, you may find your eyebrows arching involuntarily at how cleanly he's lifted the idea from Burton's bag of tricks. But despite these surface ties, Lupri avoids shackling himself to Burton's muse. The teacher clearly provides the major influence; still *Shadow of the Vibe* shows the student seeking, and often finding, ways to escape that influence and build upon it.

"Bassist John Lockwood and drummer Sebastiaan deKrom supply plenty of rhythmic and moral support on this well conceived, cleanly executed program that comprises mostly Lupri's own attractive compositions. But the respected saxist George Garzone threatens to steal the show. Garzone doesn't so much round out the quartet as he fills it up, shining his focused, take-no-prisoners solo style on Lupri's tunes and illuminating their inner corners. But Garzones approach may be a bit too surgical for Lupri's music: Lupri's own solos leave a little something hidden, and Garzone's having none of that." *Neil Tesser - Jazziz*

"Matthias Lupri is a vibraphonist with an ambitious approach to his music. Sometimes his exploratory playing is filled with glittering runs and fills, at other times it's traditional, blocking out colorful tone-textures or chords. In that sense, his playing is instantly recognizable and wonderful to hear." *James Lien, CMI Report*

"You can add the name Matthias Lupri to the list of talented young jazz vibraphonists! On *Shadow of the Vibe* this former student of Gary Burton exhibits a strong compositional pen while maximizing his 4-mallet technique in articulate fashion. Here, Lupri receives the additional benefit of performing with elder statesman and critically acclaimed saxophonist/educator George Garzone, all-world bassist John Lockwood and the sure-handed and fiery drummer, Sebastian de Krom.

"The first piece, "Investion" gets out of the box in a hurry, as Garzone's swinging yet sweet-toned soprano sax lines create an air of relaxed tension while Lupri displays maturity, nuance and a strong penchant for reworking melodies intermingled with shrewd well-constructed soloing. On this composition, the tempo picks up steam as Garzone goes full throttle while soaring into the ozone. The undulating groove settles down a bit on "Mirror" featuring Garzone's lush, romantically inclined soprano sax phrasing as Lupri sustains the colorful tonalities and subtleties. The excellent acoustic bassist John Lockwood displays amazing dexterity and control while pivoting the band with his rapidly executed walking bass lines on "Fast Corners" as de Krom darts and dances around the kit in support of the soloists and swinging themes. Other highlights are, Lupri's solo interlude on the composition titled "Intrusion", the memorable melody and quietude on "Moonlamps" shifting meter, poignant lines and strong compositional development on "New Fall". The soloists generally counterbalance one another, which enables a noticeable sense of depth, yet it would have been interesting to hear Lupri and Garzone go head to head more often in certain spots; however, the band is tight and focused, as Lupri's compositional prowess only embellishes his enviable technical abilities!

"With some pretty good numbers on the Gavin charts to his credit, Lupri's laudable technical gifts, and firmly rooted sense of direction should elevate his status in jazz, along with the added benefit of an aggressive touring/performance schedule. *Shadow of the Vibes* stands on its own as a distinctive effort, especially when so much mainstream-based jazz emanates from the marketing minds as opposed to the artists." * * * ½ *Glenn Astarita, All About Jazz*

"His is the only chordal instrument in the lineup - and Matthias Lupri makes the most of it. He's got a big sustain, and four mallets when needed. (For years he played drums in a rock band; he was drawn to the vibes by Gary Burton.) He hits hard on the solos, and comps with warm glow when George Garzone steps out. On "Investion" the power is scary: a marimba-like tone, and cries from George's soprano. "Mirror" is placid, with the saxman in charge; after a few notes, the fog rolls in. Lupri is delicate, trading notes with the bass of John Lockwood - it's a cold, wet sound. The title tune is a romantic fire: Matthias storms and George soothes, on a raspy tenor. It has the fast and the slow, the tender and the tangy - it all blends so well. It's easy to get lost in this "Shadow" ... and it's fun.

"Matthias is alone for "Intrusion"; he builds walls of sustain, then puts the theme on top. It's a sunny stroll on Sam Rivers' "Beatrice" (George takes a while to get in the groove - when he does he's golden.) "Augie's Blues" are mighty sour, with second-line drums, and unexpected

chords. Garzone is throaty this time: incisive lines, and moments of gutbucket glory. "New Fall" is more of that misty calm, now in 6/8. Back on soprano, Garzone sighs; Lupri roars on his best solo. There's even a second look at "Mirror" another minute of shimmering bliss. If there's a complaint, it's that most tracks have the same mood - but when it sounds like this, why worry?" *John Barrett, JazzUSA.com*
