



UWE OBERG - Work (Hatology 740; Switzerland) I only know of German pianist Uwe Oberg from just a handful of previous discs: a fine duo with Evan Parker and three trio offerings with Christof Thewes & Michael Griener and another trio with Frank Gratkowski as a guest. For his first solo piano effort, Mr. Oberg has put together an impressive program of covers by Charles Mingus, Ornette Coleman, Thelonious Monk and Robert Wyatt, as well as a few original songs. Three of the six pieces contain two songs which evolve into one another in striking ways. Each piece seems to involve a different approach, idea or vibe, so I get the feeling that Oberg has spent a good deal of time considering each one. The opener, "Hill", is reflective, yet still sly with a few odd twists. Putting together a classic Mingus song like "Fables of Faubus" with Ornette's "W.R.U." may seem like a strange combination, yet it somehow works since Mr. Oberg takes his time to alter the melody with unusual flourishes which somehow makes leads us into the angular melody of the Ornette song just right. Mr. Oberg takes his own piece, "Kelvin" and adds several shifting lines in a most impressive way, again setting up a story which evolves into Trane's "Crescent". The balance between the known melodies and the unknown ones is always well-integrated so that each piece works just right. My favorite piece is Oberg's "Olo Olo" which evolves into Robert Wyatt's "Muddy Mouse" from his album "Ruth is Stranger Than Richard". Banging inside the piano at first adds an aura of mystery when the piece begins. This creates a long, fascinating intro for what later turns into a lovely, solemn version of an early Wyatt song which rarely if ever has been covered. There are also two Monk covers here, "Pannonica" and "Work", both of which are well handled in their own way.

*This is one of the best solo piano efforts I've heard in recent memory, working on several fronts simultaneously.*

- Bruce Lee Gallanter, DMG, December 2015