

Manu Katche - Neighbourhood (2005)

Written by bluesever

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MANU KATCHÉ TOMASZ
STANKO JAN GARBAREK
MARCIN WASILEWSKI
SLAWOMIR KURKIEWICZ
NEIGHBOURHOOD ECM

1. November 99; 2. Number One; 3. Lullaby; 4. Good Influence; 5. February Sun; 6. No Rush; 7. Lovely Walk; 8. Take Off & Land; 9. Miles Away; 10. Rose. Personnel: Manu Katché: drums; Jan Garbarek: saxophones; Tomasz Stanko: trumpet; Marcin Wasilewski: piano; Slawomir Kurkiewicz: double-bass.

The superb French/Ivory Coast drummer Manu Katche, long a backing force on many ECM sessions, steps out on his own for the first time on this label and comes up with a gem -- with a little help from some of the ECM stars. Indeed, "Neighbourhood" is a very appropriate title, for there are several interlocking orbits of personnel within this album. For a start, the CD marks another collaboration between trumpeter Tomasz Stanko and saxophonist Jan Garbarek, the latter whom Katche has been backing on and off since the early '90s. Moreover Stanko brought along part of his Polish rhythm team, pianist Marcin Wasilewski and bassist Slawomir Kurkiewicz, for the session. Michel Petrucciani is clearly on Katche's mind, for not only is the album dedicated to the late pianist, the reflective, ardently lyrical mood of Katche's compositions -- and Wasilewski's piano work -- are quite reminiscent of Petrucciani at his most relaxed. And Katche can write; his tunes are often wistful and thoughtful, his percussive backing crisp yet subtle, carefully filling in the cracks while keeping just enough of a gentle pulse. The best of the lot, the simple angular tune of "Good Influence," grabs you by the throat, tugs at your heart, and doesn't quit the memory -- sure signs of greatness. By contrast, "Lovely Walk" kicks up the tempo behind an ostinato bass while "Take Off and Land" brings in a touch of fatback funk. If there is a single wellspring behind this music -- besides Petrucciani of course -- Herbie Hancock's acoustic combo recordings of the late '60s come closest in terms of ambience and harmony. Call this album an inspired descendant two generations and an ocean away.

---Richard S. Ginell, Rovi

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