Warne Marsh - Ne Plus Ultra (1969)



1.You Stepped Out Of A Dream (9:05) 2.Lennie's Pennies (4:23) 3.317 E. 32nd (8:17) 4.Subconscious-Lee (4:17) 5.Touch And Go (15:24) 6.Two Part Invention # 13 (0:59)
Warne Marsh - tenor sax Gary Foster - alto sax Dave Parlato - bass John Tirabasso – drums
Herrick Chapel Lounge,LA. September - October 1969

This was tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh's first recording as a leader since 1960. Teamed up with complementary altoist Gary Foster (who was most influenced by Marsh's former musical partner Lee Konitz), bassist Dave Parlato and drummer John Tirabasso, Marsh runs through some of his favorite chord changes, including "Lennie's Pennies," "Subconscious-Lee" and "You Stepped Out of a Dream." In addition, there is a fairly free group improvisation (the 15-minute "Touch and Go") and a brief rendition of Bach's "Two-Part Inventions #13." A strong all-around CD reissue that was originally released by the Revelation label. --- Scott Yanow, Rovi

A largely unsung classic, originally released in 1969, and featuring the most purist of all the followers of Cool School guru Lennie Tristano's ascetically linear method of jazz improvising. West Coast saxophonist Warne Marsh (like all the Tristanoites) liked staying in a narrow dynamic range, but within it he could perform miracles of melodic invention and rhythmic audacity - though almost always performing the latter over a metronomically steady drummer's groove. Marsh plays much of this music as a sax chase often ending in a contrapuntal tussle with the Konitz/Charlie Parkerish altoist Gary Foster and the music features two typical extended-bop Tristano originals, Konitz's Subconscious-Lee and variations on Bach's Two Part Invention No 13.

It's an outwardly orthodox jazz record (obligatory drum solos before the return to the theme and all) but close listening to the improvising confirms what a quiet giant Marsh was. A galloping Subconscious-Lee sounds like a long-connected couple finishing each other's sentences, Touch and Go is a free-improvisation that begins brooding, gets lighter and becomes exuberant swing, and the minute or so of Bach is a contrapuntal exercise that points to the uncanny links between baroque music and this kind of jazz-making. ---John Forham, theguardian.com

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