

Till Bronner & Dieter Ilg - Nightfall (2018)

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01. *A Thousand Kisses Deep* 02. *The Fifth of Beethoven* 03. *Nightfall* 04. *Nobody Else But Me* 05. *Air* 06. *Scream & Shout* 07. *Wetterstein* 08. *Eleanor Rigby* 09. *Peng! Peng!* 10. *Body & Soul* 11. *Ach, bleib mit Deiner Gnade* Till Bronner - trumpet, flugelhorn Dieter Ilg - bass

With only a single melody instrument and a bass, you've not only got instant minimalism but also the musical tension that is usually created by the absence of a harmony instrument: as a listener, with just the scales and the bottom notes to go on, you have to supply the implied harmony yourself. In short, it's a challenge for both the players and the audience. This German duo – Till Brönner on trumpet/flugelhorn, Dieter Ilg, bass – make it work by drawing upon a range of techniques and a wide range of sources.

They wrote three of the tracks themselves. The rest range from standards (*Body and Soul*, *Nobody Else But Me*) to contemporary pop (will.i.am's *Scream and Shout*), '60s pop (*Eleanor Rigby*) to classical (Bach's *Air*) and even renaissance church music (Melchior Vulpius's *Ach bleib mit deiner Gnade* – 'Abide among us with your grace').

Of course, in the space left where the harmony should go there's room for thinking about other things, such as the groove and the dynamics. Take Ornette Coleman's *The Fifth of Beethoven*, which starts with flugelhorn and bass playing the lines in unison, as on Coleman's original, after which the two separate to play successive solos. But it works because of the impeccable groove established from the start. As for dynamics, these are present not so much within individual tunes as across the album as a whole, from the mellow *Body and Soul* to the neurotic *Wetterstein* to the austerity of *Air*.

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On the Brönner/Ilg-penned title track, recording technology comes into it too, with both reverb and plate echo helping to make it less stark, along with Ilg playing bass chords here and there to lighten the mood.

Scream and Shout is perhaps the most accessible tune to modern ears. Here, they allow themselves some electronic pad sounds at the start, and Ilg's bass has been double-tracked, whilst Brönner's trumpet has been put through some sort of electric guitar emulator. On the gorgeous, evocative Ach bleib mit deiner Gnade serenity is achieved by laying sparse flugelhorn lines on top of a bowed bass and pad drone. By contrast, the self-written tracks Wetterstein and Peng! Peng! are avant-garde fragments, without melody or time.

Brönner has moved on a long way since the late '90s, when he was hailed as the feathery-toned reincarnation of Chet Baker. Nightfall is a darker, more mature and more experimental piece of work. ---Peter Jones, londonjazznews.com

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