



The Vinyl Anachronist

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Andy Adamson Quintet's First Light on CD

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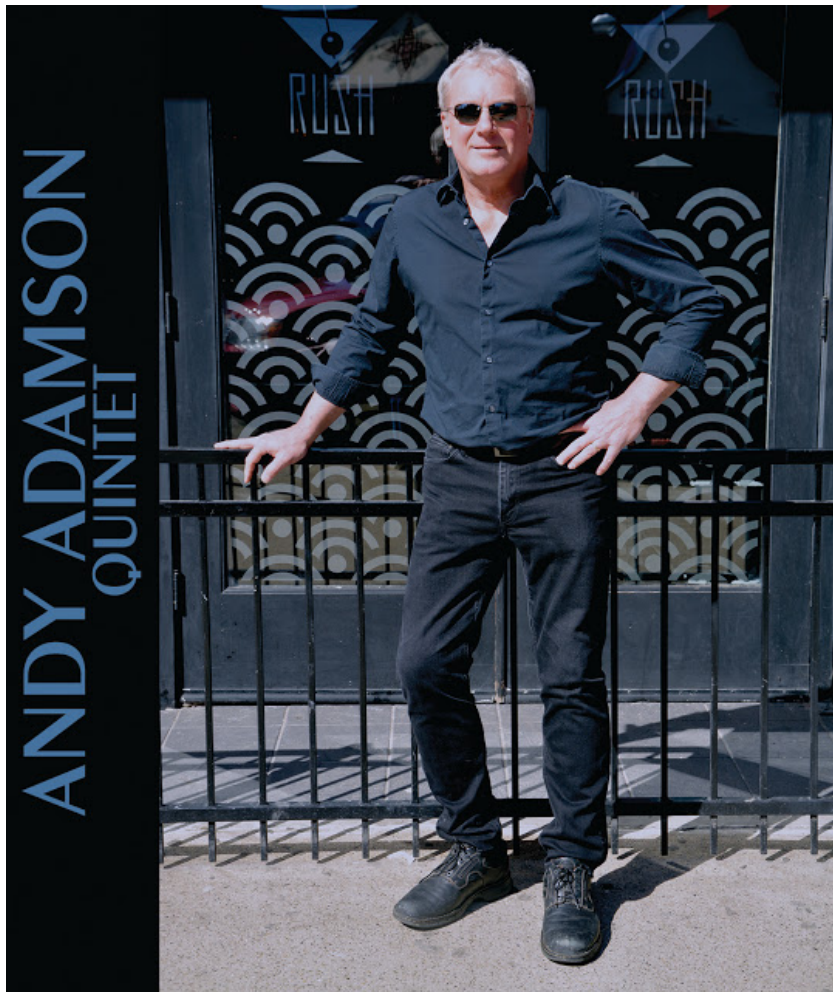
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Marc Phillips



Since 1998 I've been

writing about LPs and turntables under the Vinyl Anachronist moniker for such publications as Part-Time Audiophile, Perfect Sound Forever, AudioEnz, TONEAudio and Positive Feedback Online. I've currently partnered with Colleen Cardas to form Colleen Cardas Imports, the US distributor of Unison Research, Opera Loudspeakers, PureAudio, Axis VoiceBox, REDGUM Audio and Les Davis Audio. I currently live in New York.

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There are a lot of terms you can use to describe a jazz musician, but "self-taught" isn't a common one. Most jazz musicians work hard to get where they are, and they've studied with a few master musicians along the way. When I delve into the liner notes of some of these contemporary jazz titles I've been reviewing, there's always a story about a famous musician who influenced the artist when he was young, or where he was born into a family of musicians, or whatever.

Andy Adamson, however, is a self-taught jazz pianist and composer. Sure, he was influenced by Coltrane, Chick Corea and the Mahavishnu Orchestra, but he sounds like he does because he's been doing this for 50 years. He's had time to poke around and figure out what this jazz stuff is all about.

His new CD, *First Light*, is a collection of originals from his "vast catalogue of original work." His fellow musicians--sax player Dan Bennett, bassist Brendan Andes, drummer Jonathan Taylor and trumpeter Ross Huff--are noted for their tremendous body of experience in the jazz world, and for their ability to handle some of Adamson's polyrhythmic structures in his songs. Throughout *First Light* you'll hear so many evolving textures and dynamics, an Adamson trademark, that you'll question whether or not the same five gentlemen are hanging around for every track. They are.

In some cases, the dynamic contrasts are contained in a single song--note the crazy, electrified coda for "Twilight in the Making." Throughout the album there's a sense that the space between the songs



isn't aligned with what you're hearing, that some songs have suite-like structures while other themes pop up in one song only to end in another. Perhaps that's where Adamson's autodidact approach is a true gift since he's not bound by the few rules that do exist in jazz but still manages to construct moving and coherent melodies.

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First Light deserves a listen because of that willingness to stand out from the crowd. It's original, and that's something in a genre so in touch with preserving the past.

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