

The Jazz Breakfast (GB)

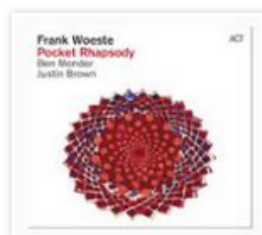
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Frank Woeste – Pocket Rhapsody

BY PETER BACON on 28 JANUARY 2016 • (0)



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The German pianist has been living in France for quite a while and has played in the bands of trumpeter Ibrahim Maalouf and vocalist Youn Sun Nah. Both of them appear on selected tracks on this album along with Woeste's trio members, Ben Monder on guitar and Justin Brown on drums. There are also string arrangements in places with Sarah Nemtanu on violin and Gregoire Korniluk on cello, and Woeste

plays Fender Rhodes, organ and bass synth as well as piano.

Woeste writes hooky melodies and neat, funky motifs, whether for his Fender Rhodes or for pizzicato strings; his bowed string writing – try the end of *Mirage* – is both effective and affecting.

The Youn Sun Nah track, called *The Star Gazer* with her lyrics to Woeste's melody, is a real stand-out. Strings, both pizzicato and bowed, state the theme – it has more than a touch of the rhapsodic about it – before Woeste's piano fills in some spaces and Youn Sun Nah sings with a compelling held-in intensity and sustain, the instruments dancing around her before drums and bass synth add the pulse and expand the sonic depth. Woeste stretches out on a solo before gently returning the tune to the singer.

The two tracks featuring Maalouf inevitable have a Middle Eastern feel to them. At first listen the range of the music, and the changing personnel and style, means that each track sounds like it could be from a different album. After a while Woeste's distinctive way of mixing acoustic and Rhodes lines, and his attention to sonic detail, draw it all together.

The arrangements mean that even on a shortish track there is a lot going on. Pocket rhapsodies indeed. And good fun, too.