

JAZZ

Raphaël Pannier Quartet
Faune (French Paradox)



This excellent album is the debut release of French drummer Raphaël Pannier. It might do well to remember that name.

Especially of note for a debut release are Pannier's flawless drumming and compositional skills. His drumming is never intrusive; it's always an accompaniment for the tune.

Unsurprisingly, there is a French flavour to much of the music, with impressionistic arrangements of Maurice Ravel and Olivier Messiaen, along with fascinating covers of Ornette Coleman's *Lonely Woman* and Wayne Shorter's *ESP*. The arrangements of these jazz classics make them sound fresh and new while respecting the familiarity of the originals.

Apparently the mentor and stimulus for the album was alto sax player Miguel Zenón, referred to as Pannier's "musical director and 'big brother.'" Zenón's usual energy and scope rounds out the quartet with pianist Aaron Goldberg and bassist François Moutin.

Zenón sits out on some tracks and the group becomes a trio, showing off Goldberg's extraordinary piano skills. Pannier's *Monkey Puzzle Tree* is a tour de force for the quartet while *Lullaby* is quietly evocative. Pannier's arrangement of Messiaen's *Le Baiser de L'Enfant Jesus* exudes a sense of peace that bends concepts of "classical" and "jazz" into something that is simply lovely music.

Jazz is constantly reinventing itself, so it is always fun to hear a new voice for the first time who sounds like someone to assist in the re-invention. This album has thoroughly wonderful music, which flows with ease from gentle tracks to up-tempo moments that somehow never leave the lyrical mood.

It is at once sophisticated and complex while presenting ideas that are just right for the moment. The Pannier originals sound like the work of a fully mature musician. This young drummer has a great future. As I mentioned, remember that name.

★★★★1/2

Steam these: *Lonely Woman*, Ravel: *Forlane*
— Keith Black