

COREY WILKES

DROP IT
(DELMARK)

Drop It has character, humor, and freshness: original and authentic at the same time, it stands out — probably thanks to a bunch of talented musicians.

Miyanda Wilson, intriguing and natural, opens the album. Her very musical spoken acapella is soon accompanied by the trumpet (Wilkes) and the drums (Jeremy “Bean” Clemons), which softly introduce themselves. It is followed by a groovy “Sonata in the Key of Jack Daniels” and the delight begins, tranquil, profound, and at times experimental, almost. Experimentation might be what the album is all about, and yet it remains classically oriented, and smooth.

The title-track has a Herbie Hancock vibe to it, with Robert “Baabe” Irving III at the Fender Rhodes and Junius Paul doubling on acoustic and electric bass. It is free jazz that is occasionally borderline repetitive, like the recurrent theme of the album - a pleasant melody and rhythm, but did so many songs need it? Likewise, “Remy’s revenge” might be too predictable rhythmically and melodically.

Among Wilkes’ cohorts, saxophonist Jabari Liu who takes a hugely original tenor solo on “Ubiquitous Budaflly” and Dee Alexander whose vocal contribution serves the experimental touch of the album very nicely need to be singled out.

“Funkier than a Mosquito’s Tweeter,” is one of the funniest and most enthralling songs ever. Dee Alexander’s voice, ravishing, adjusts marvelously to a somewhat nonsensical theme (a mosquito’s tweeter, or rather, what is ‘funkier’ than a mosquito’s tweeter).

Wilkes takes risks, and it is much appreciated. Daniel Melnick’s rendering of Wilkes’s art in the liner notes is, in this regard, enlightening. — **EMILIE PONS**

MATT ULERY’S LOOM

MUSIC BOX BALLERINA
(WOOLGATHERING MUSIC)

Music Box Ballerina is original. And delicious. Bass player Matt Ulery proves daring in his musical experimentations. The opener, “Kentucky Animal Orchestra,” presents a wonderful theme. It is fresh and all the instruments, including Rob Clearfield’s accordion, contribute to creating pleasant and special harmonies. In the second part of the song, Matt Ulery and violinist Zach Brock embark on a sophisticated and vibrant duo; then Brock continues on his own, reminding us of Billy Bang or Didier Lockwood. Then the violinist is joined by Clearfield before the theme is reiterated, and when the song ends, the cycle is complete.

Compositions such as “Good Morning” or “Slow and Awake” are alone worth the price of admission.

In “Good Morning,” as in “Pink Sea and Wondering Without,” the violin displays quite some energy and depth. The aptly-titled “Slow and Awake” is unhurried and enthralling. For the first time in the album, you will hear Grazyna Auguscik’s voice and be absolutely delighted. Even if you don’t pay attention to the lyrics, you cannot not be charmed.

“Liguria” is as original as it is appeasing. It also gives a chance to hear Rob Clearfield at the piano. As he experiments with his instrument, his tone reveals at times some Keith Jarrett influences. “Constant” is simply beautiful. It is lyrical and peaceful at the same time.

“House Logic” closes the album in an unusual way. It explores sounds, harmonies, and rhythmical mixes of various natures while narrating its own story. In fact, each song on *Music Box Ballerina* tells a story. Some are playful and reminiscent of circus or brass bands. They do not shy away from humor, which is more than welcome. Overall, the album’s sounds stimulate all the senses. Enjoy! — **EMILIE PONS**

