jazz hot
la revue international du jazz n° 617
February 2005

Discoveries

Jon Weber *– Simple Complex*
2ndCenturyJazz Records

Jon Weber's musical and philosophical leanings are clearly international and modern. Contrary to some musicians making the same seductive claim, this one masters music and jazz impeccably. The career of this prodigious Chicago stride piano virtuoso and composer, now in his 40's, has numerous contrasts - which this recording demonstrates brilliantly. His music, largely influenced by Chick Corea's Latin and fusion moods, distinguishes itself by its assertive complexity (overlapping multiple rhythmic successions and harmonic richness), which the artist attempts to transcend with indisputable melodicism, as the album title suggests.

An ambitious project worthy of respect - but whose flawless production keeps it rather reserved. In fact, this music is mostly of a decisive spirit, and Jon Weber claims to be able to play anything, with anyone - his eloquent list of collaborators flows from Cuban to Indian, from Bop to Samba, from Bach to Funk: an exotic mix that might give some a little indigestion. No reason, however, to neglect what we enjoy: Weber is indeed an impressive musician, not only for his instrumental performance but also for his ambitious compositions. The best pieces are those which are mostly acoustic - making the least sacrifices to the spirit of «fusion». But once you've taken out the blues (greatly missed on this CD, despite a fine rendition of «Mister Kleckley»), adding every world rhythm known, what remains that is specifically jazz? This certainly corresponds with the profile of virtuoso studio musicians, talented educators... but not with that of musicians anchored solidly in purist jazz culture. This CD will please musicians and impress music lovers. As for purity of emotion, we'll have to wait for a more coherent project. Not less complex, not simpler, just purer.

- - - - *Jean Szlamowicz*

Jazz Hot CDs choice