Wayne Horvitz: The Snowghost Sessions

By **GLENN ASTARITA**
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This trio set is one of two concurrent releases by venerable composer/keyboardist Wayne Horvitz. On *Those Who Remain* (National Sawdust, 2018) he is supported by an orchestra and guitarist Bill Frisell, to complement his other classical-focused outings spanning the past two decades. As *The Snowghost Sessions* finds Horvitz aligning with longtime cohorts, bassist Geoff Harper and drummer Eric Eagle who recorded this outing in the enviable settings of an audiophile-grade studio in scenic Whitefish, Montana.

Horvitz has been at the forefront of invention as an active participant in New York City's downtown scene, along with his bands, Zony Mash, Pigpen; along with numerous solo albums and ad hoc projects. Here, the relaxed vibe transfers to disc rather poignantly, especially when he uses various electronics effects to offset the core piano trio developments.

At times the keyboardist implements dark and undulating treatments similar to vintage Brian Eno's interminable void soundscapes, yet some works are blotted with menacing backdrops and bizarre synth patterns. Most of these tracks are designed with memorable licks and hummable melody lines amid the leader's soulful twirls and breezy lyricism.

No doubt, this is a jazz piano trio that thinks out-of-the-box, to complement the conventional inner-workings, gently flowing narratives, eerie fadeouts and concisely stated passages.

On "Trish," Horvitz weaves a deeply personal ballad with a harmonically attractive motif atop the rhythm section's delicate support. The following piece, "IMB," features his oddball effects, contrasted by a swift bop pulse with angular and serrated synth soloing topped off by a deconstruction effort that dissipates into nothingness.

The diverse program continues on "Flies on Friday," where Horvitz launches a haunting piano etude with reverberating effects snuggled into an ethereal theme that cyclically drifts into the night sky. However, the tide turns during "55 6 (21) Variations," which is a bluesy piano and organ piece, quietly driven home by bassist Geoff Harper's heartfelt solo.

Horvitz once again goes against the grain by vividly morphing familiar musical turf via persuasive compositions, abetted by cunning deviations and abstract viewpoints that yield additional enchantments on subsequent listens.

Track Listing: The Pauls; No Blood Relations #1; Trish; IMB; Apart From You #1; Northampton; For James Tenney; No Blood Relations #2; Flies on Friday; The Trees; Yukio and Nao’s Duet; 55 6 (21) Variations; 55 6 (7) Variations; Apart From You #2; American Bandstand (bonus track, not on CD).

Personnel: Wayne Horvitz: piano, amplified piano, live processing, Wurlitzer electric piano, Hammond B-3, Nord Lead, TX-7, and Mellotron; Geoff Harper: contrabass; Eric Eagle: drums and percussion.

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