WAYNE HORVITZ - THE SNOWGHOST SESSIONS

October 15, 2018

Label: Songlines, 2018

Personnel – **Wayne Horvitz**: keyboards, electronics; **Geoff Harper**: counterbass; **Eric Eagle**: drums.

Although well rooted in his jazz pianism, Wayne Horvitz, a likable musician who made his name in the 1980's downtown New York music scene, dauntlessly ventures in different styles that range from classical to electronic. ***The Snowghost Sessions*** marks his first trio record since the 80's, featuring 14 tracks whose cinematic quality is stepped up through the application of electronic effects, amplified and processed piano, and a few overdubs. Old compositions are rejuvenated and new ones come to life dressed in 21st-century sonic outfits.

The album is a product of a weeklong residency at SnowGhost in Whitefish, Montana, and features a rhythm pair from Seattle: contrabassist Geoff Harper and drummer Eric Eagle.

The overdubs work nicely on "*No Blood Relation #1*", a plaintive waltzing experiment layered with acuteness. Horvitz pastes a surrounding noise effect with his keyboard for spiciness, having bass and drums working tight in the back. Conversely, the second version of this piece feels very jazzy, underscored by Eagle's sober brushwork. Also recreating himself with brushes while waltzing, the drummer propels the short "*Trish*", an old tune written for The Royal Room Collective Music Ensemble, with resolution.

While "*The Pauls*" is patiently cooked and feels experimental in its quietude, even evasive at times, the downtempo "*Northampton*" spreads beautiful melody and a gospel flavor that derives from the lengthened organ chords. The dissonant vibe induced by the combination of piano and bass is delicious. Also melodically poignant and prone to ambient, "*Yukio and Nao's Duet*" - referring to dancers Yukio Suzuki and Nao Ashimine - rests on an endless harmonic cycle. Both dancers collaborated with Horvitz in *55: Music and Dance in Concrete*, a 2014 installation whose variations 21 and 7 were picked up for this album. The former offers a short bass solo over a minimal classical loop, while the latter brings up a relaxed, trippy beat and soaring electronics as variants.

Don't think everything is undisturbed and contemplative because broader gestures of the trio originate denser scenarios such as the ones heard on the riotous "*IMB*", whose crazy swinging passages are enlivened with electronic processing for a psychedelic effect, and "*For James Tenney*", which moves forward at a galloping rhythm until the final chordal burst.

Attentive to sound design, Horvitz goes on making interesting albums, typically distinct from one another, where audio mixing has an important role.

Favorite Tracks:

02 – No Blood Relation #1 ► 04 – IMB ► 06 – Northampton

Grade **B+**