

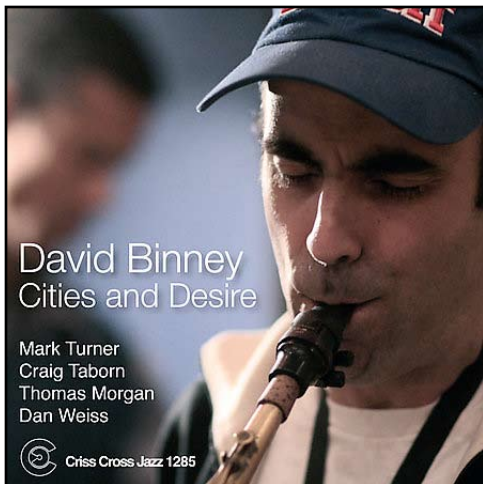
David Binney

Cities And Desire (Criss Cross)

IT USUALLY TAKES a while for Criss Cross albums to make the trek from Holland where the label is located to the U.S. where many of the players are from. *Cities And Desire*, the third album from New York-based alto saxophonist David Binney, is no different. Here Binney leads a hot working band (they play the 55 Bar in NYC regularly) that includes saxophonist Mark Turner, drummer Dan Weiss, bassist Thomas Morgan and keyboardist Craig Taborn (here exclusively playing acoustic piano for a change and sounding great). As one would expect from this crew, these post-bop tunes are knotty – filled with off beat meters, detailed filigree and challenging musical flights – but they never lose the sense of swing. The band stretches out to fine effect on “London” and “Miami” while the more concise “Los Angeles” covers a surprising amount of ground. As the titles suggest, Binney wrote these songs during nomadic stretch in 2005 and they are all tied together into a cohesive whole, sometimes aided by short intros. As such, it’s a fine overall effort with a lot of bright moments.

– Tad Hendrickson

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Michael Blanco

In The Morning (Fresh Sounds)

THE WINNER OF ASCAP Foundation Young Jazz Composer Award in 2005 and 2006, bassist Michael Blanco seems to be making all the right moves. The San Diego native now based in New York City has played with such varied folk as Doc Cheatham, Norah Jones, Randy Brecker as well as a host of Broadway show bands. He throws himself wholly into harmonic rich and sophisticated style of jazz on *In The Morning* that is proof that he’s absorbed a fair amount of theory in his time, but, as those composition awards prove, he’s got a good ear for melody. Some will no doubt also be impressed with his tasteful solos (particularly on “Point Of View”), but the real standout in that department is pianist Aaron Goldberg, who breaks these Blanco originals wide open with stunning work on nearly every track. Highlights include the ebullient “Uptown Meditations,” the galloping “One More Time” and the sort of sad sort of happy “Within Reach.” Another fine effort from the Fresh Sounds label.

– Tad Hendrickson

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