

OCTAGON

The group's second album containing only the original material proves to be a consistent work full of interesting ideas. Despite a standard jazz combo format the group achieves a rather unique sound.



Dance

The opening composition displays all the main features of the whole album – odd metres, a fluent but reliable bass (*Pavel Voronezhsky*), a briefly surfacing and easily going to background guitar (*Sergey Bogdan*), energetic drums (*Denis Melnikov*), and a piano (*Eugene Popov*) taking major melodic and improvisational duties. The song starts without any introduction. The slightly processed classical guitar sounding in a folk manner exposes a short main theme, which is repeated in a rondo-like succession for more than 1.5 minutes. Then a powerful bass comes in and the other instruments follow. At first the theme seems tiresome but in a while it enchants you with its unusual rhythm of 4 + 3 + 3 + 3. After a resolute bridge a lyrical improvisation comes in with the dramatic bridge revealing itself in the middle one more time. Finally a short reprise brings the theme back just when you start missing it.

Unexpected Guest

An extended melancholic and contemplative piano introduction is followed by a light bossa nova with a chain of alternating solos by *Bogdan* and *Popov*. However it is not just Latin jazz and the bossa nova can turn either into an ominous episode or a repetitive short 9/4 motif. The pianist increases intensity in his developed solo which softly resolves over the familiar 9/4 figure. The guitar bossa nova gets interrupted once again with menacing piano chords and the return of the introduction rounds up the cycle.

December Rain

December rain typical for Crimea continues the Latin theme but you cannot expect pure styles from the Fusion Orchestra. The rhythms and moods are changing, what seemed to be a smooth jazz rumba in a wink becomes swing (not a real strength of the ensemble though) and then funk. Here we can hear the first guest appearance – vocal of *Lolita Poplavskaya*. Unfortunately she was not allowed to deviate from the theme longer than a couple of measures so this colour in the limited group's palette showed just as a stroke. Another interesting moment is inclusion of a real rain sound into the record. And it is not just in the intro or fade out which would be completely trivial if not banal. It is in the middle of the composition and it lasts good 1.5 minutes. All the instruments tactfully release the pressure and the rain and *Voronezhsky's* pulsing bass come to the foreground.

Jadido

The fact that these musicians highly respect **Chick Corea** becomes evident in the “Spanish-speaking” **Jadido** by *Voronezhsky*. Its violin version was released on the first band's CD. Arguably, it is the most popular number from their repertoire. Irresistible drive, captivating full stops... Why is it not played by radio stations? The only thing getting me off rhythm is the too loose drum solo. However the album's voltage is getting higher.

Black Bagel

The title is inspired by **Victor Pelevin's** novel **The Clay Machine-Gun (Chapaev i Pustota)**. Its main recognizable feature is a rhythmically complex and ever escaping bass figure which unpredictably rolls groups of three and four eighths notes. The first theme is anxious and questioning, the second one is a philosophical response. Now and then we can hear an extra quarter and in a moment another quarter is missing. In the middle part the guitar and the piano trade short solos divided by lightning speed basslines. *Bogdan's* guitar is far from the common patterns here. In the short break all-knowing Chapaev whistles the second theme standing at the edge of Ural (the Undefinable River of Absolute Love), and then a windmill of sounds captures you again.

Mayan Loom

Another enigmatic title meaning probably not the infamous device *the Loom of Maya* but rather the symmetric pattern of their calendar tool reflecting the structure of our DNA. But let's talk about music, and the music just rocks! This is a composition of a serious length (longer than 10 minutes) and serious tension. Light jazz gives up the place to solid rock. Live sounds interweave in a rhythm of a loom, the musical texture is subtly coloured with non-standard programming. Another chromatic solo by *Bogdan*, then great piano work by *Popov* followed by – surprise! – his electric guitar solo in a manner far from the common ways. The rhythm section is amazing. Little pearls are sprinkled here and there – burst of double tempo before the end, harmonics sending shivers down my spine, and finally the stopped time of the disappeared civilization. Well, the music is much greater than this description!

Russia

By the album's end the tension eases although the final songs are full of drama. The initial title of **Russia** was **Country Miles**. These are exactly the associations caused by the monotonous repetitive theme backed however with some harmonic movement. But the words Russia, boundless spaces, endless roads live well together and they are underlined by certain Russian thematizm. The melodically developed middle part with gradually doubling tempo is particularly interesting.

Forgotten Feelings

The CD closes with a romantic rhapsody for piano solo. The ending piece manages a rare finale combining downfall of the rhythmic intensity with increasing emotional intensity.

In the conclusion I would like to say something about the album as a whole. The cover design is pale but highly original. The disc released in the CD-Text format but unfortunately the song titles are in Cyrillic and are not displayed right by most players. Personally I would like if the always present propulsive and melodic bass of *Pavel Voronezhsky* was exposed at least in a single solo. I hope these wee remarks will not diminish all the strengths of this excellent body of work.

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