

MANUEL ROCHEMAN

« COME SHINE »

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When, at the age of ten, he received a present of a lovely Oscar Peterson solo record from his brother (« Tracks » being the record in question), Manuel had already been learning to play the piano for four years. He felt a sense of great freedom as he listened to the Canadian virtuoso, and wanted to follow in his footsteps. But first he had to become capable of it and fit himself out with the necessary technical skills. This he did by taking piano, percussion and writing lessons at the Paris CNR. In 1984, he celebrated, at one and the same time, his twentieth birthday, obtaining his final diploma in the Alberto Neuman piano class, and winning the first prize for solo player at the Concours National de Jazz de la Défense (National La Défense Jazz Contest). Yes, you did read "Jazz", for meanwhile, he had got into jazz in a big way, having first been introduced to it by Michel Sardaby, then by Martial Solal; who was to become his first master, and of whom he was to be the only pupil in real terms. In 1986 he won other medals: piano sight-reading, piano, state diploma of Jazz music teaching. Once again, yes, you did read "Jazz": contrary to what many people seem to be persuaded of; jazz has, for a long time and now more than ever, required its musicians to exercise great discipline in the mastery of all the tools of its elaboration. Among these tools figures the instrument, that you must dominate before it begins to dominate you... Manuel, with his faultless technique and solid culture, was now well-equipped to launch himself in his career. Very soon, professionals recognised his immense talent: best French pianist at the Premier Concours International Martial Solal (1989), award for the best French record from the French Jazz Academy (1991), Django d'Or for his second record (1992)... Mostly playing as part of a trio, with double bass player Christophe Wallemme and drummer Simon Goubert, sometimes as a solo player (or with two pianos, playing with - get this - Martial Solal himself), Manuel Rocheman started to get himself established, not quickly enough in our opinion, as one of the greatest pianists of our time. Artists from all horizons have called upon him, ranging from Didier Levallet and Jacques Vidal to the saxophonists Peter King and Anthony Ortega. In 1996, the National Jazz Orchestra commissioned a work from him: he created « San Felipe » for the NJO and the Montpellier Philharmonic Orchestra. Rocheman displays his great talents as a composer once again in his fourth trio record, which was recorded in 1997 in New York in the company of two giants, double bass player George Mraz and drummer Al Foster. Zig Zag, in particular, alternates between duple and triple time quite naturally.

This new CD, « Come Shine », the still of a key moment in the career of one of the greatest pianists of his generation, opens up the door to a thousand new adventures. We are very much looking forward to following them.

« COME SHINE »

It is not because you buy a Ferrari that you necessarily have the talent to drive it well. The extraordinary impression of comfort, of contained power and perfect command that we get while listening to « Come Shine », Manuel Rocheman's fourth CD, indicates the high level of achievement that this pianist has reached. He did not choose his two companions for a one-off hit, just to attract the punters with a snazzy line-up. Many have burnt their wings trying to fly higher than their know-how allows them to. Manuel quite simply chose two partners at his level, who strive with him to transcend their superb professionalism to play the trio adventure at the height of its fusion and interdependence, rigour and freedom, each blazing the personality trail and yet being generous with the two others. May we point out that Mraz, going beyond his extraordinary virtuosity, has already shown a thousand times that he knows how to draw the best out of other great pianists, from Oscar Peterson to Tommy Flanagan and Jimmy Rowles. As for Foster, in the same context, he has without fail proved to be gifted with a rare sensitivity, whereas with Miles Davis in the 1980s, he was to be heard setting off thunderstorms. Manuel, thus solidly backed, and shored up by his vast piano and jazz culture, lets us hear and know in the wink of an eye that he has managed to free himself from the stamp of his first master, Solal, and elders of whose talents he has managed to capture the best, I'm thinking of the likes of Peterson and of Phineas Newborn Jr. With his nimble fingers and a profusion of clear ideas, he gives us music as fresh as spring water, that does not stop swinging for a second, romantic when the moment is right, but never sloppy, intelligent but always legible, terribly demanding but always seductive.

In his repertory, several good standards, without a trace of cliché, including an amazing *Just In Time* of which the theme is not stated until nearly at the end, and in original scores from each side of the triangle. Manuel's two compositions make for smooth listening with a perfectly natural flow, despite their formal complexity with bars that alternate between duple and triple time in *Zig Zag*. From the first to the last note, this very beautiful CD bears witness to the delightful maturity of three artists who are now to be considered heavyweights.