

# The New York Second - Music At Night (And Other Stories)

RELEASE DATE: 03/07/2022

Total playing time: 59:52

Score: 20 out of 20. "High-flyer".

The "New York" Second – this band name does however not lead to the USA, but to the Netherlands. The reason for this is that the mastermind behind this group is Dutch pianist and composer Harald Walkate, born in 1970. He has been playing the piano since 1980 and since 2015 this is the band through which he realizes compositions. And so all of the ten new compositions on this – third – album "Music At Night (and Other Stories)" come from him, and he has also arranged them. The album was recorded in the Netherlands, in July 2021.

After two albums were presented in quartet and quintet format, we now experience music from The New York Second in septet formation, and very good musicians from the Dutch music scene introduce themselves. The result is a mixture of various influences, not only based on jazz history: soul, classical music and Latin have also found their way in. The record is said to have been inspired by the English author Aldous Huxley, specifically by his book of essays "Music At Night". Accordingly, these compositions are to be understood as stories, with plotlines, unexpected turns and different chapters, which try to "express the inexpressible". (After silence that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music. Aldous Huxley)

But, to return to the arrangements. Harald Walkate can score on this aspect immediately, because in the first minute of the opening song, "These Are The Chosen Words", he already speaks a powerfully individual language! A few bars with the piano, a "mini-theme" is suggested, drums and bass insert themselves into the dialogue, and soon the wind instruments join in and make concise statements.

This has the expressiveness of a big band, and there is a brilliant play with the instruments; after less than two minutes I am already overwhelmed by the impressions. This is indeed very unusual: rarely have I heard anything like this. I have grown particularly fond of arrangers such as Gil Evans – because he too created very unique arrangements – and I detect this Evans-feeling in the opening song. It is not a classical structure: the group firmly starts out in the septet format, but then breaks up, while maintaining discipline, to suddenly create space, for example – on this track – for the solo of trumpeter and flugelhorn player Teus Nobel, who also acted as co-producer besides producer Walkate.

What is there to come if the opening song already captivates me like this?

"Him, a Bull? Ha! A Bird" sinks into a lyrical mood, one that I almost associate with a touch of Frank Chastenier, also a pianist. Jesse Schilderink plays a tenor sax solo that sends cold shivers down my spine. What an individual sound that is! He underlines the lyricism of the song, but adds scratchy tones, no Ben Webster, no Paul Desmond, no Trane, here and there a light honk; I hear long drawn-out tones, and like on a wave or a surge he glides through his solo.

Goodness me, another climax. It just keeps unfolding in this way, I keep discovering strongly atmospheric arrangements, beautifully and poetically played by this fantastic band.

So I also read that previous critics have called this group's music "cinematic". Well, that must be an excellent film for which it can be used, or, in other words: each song triggers individual movies that play in the personal cinema in my head. The recording succeeds in fusing the different shades from slowly rolling and floating to urgent and forceful, and consistently it is the soloists who contribute decisively to reaching resolutions and creating release within the intricate arrangements, as in the wonderful flute solo by Mark Alban Lotz on "The Bostonian"! The protagonist himself also contributes a very soulful and strongly romantic solo. In general, I feel his solos are strongly oriented in this direction, often more in the classical than in the realm of pure jazz.

The world is drowned, "The Drowned World" is up next to contribute yet another very unusual opening theme. The muffled drums separate my mind somewhat from jazz spheres and introduce elements of fusion, and here I'm reminded of Peter Herbolzheimer. Music At Night, that's exactly right, this theme has been realized. Somehow you can feel it, sometimes reminiscent of a black & white movie. The whole thing is strongly characterized by melodies; sometimes they sound dreamy, sometimes indulgent, sometimes longing, sometimes sad, but often full of hope and contentment. Perhaps this is indeed a congenial gateway to the meditative world of Aldous Huxley?

It also becomes interesting when the group operates without the rhythm section, as in "The Rest Is Silence", a beguiling sound pattern, which also evokes certain Willem Breuker songs and sounds very pastoral.

"The Ayes Have It" seems to me the jazziest song on the album, and the brilliant drummer makes it swing gallantly. The horn section comes in very gently, oh how smoothly they meander! Yes, this is the last song of the album, track ten is only a "reprise" of "The Drowned World", but it is another – and thus the last – highlight of this amazing release.

I certainly wouldn't have expected this, since all the different varieties of jazz had by now been practically exhausted. However, there is one wish I would like to express: I wouldn't have minded a guitar player in the mix. Maybe Philip Catherine?

Oh, for those who still have the desire and the time, a booklet of liner notes is enclosed providing some background information about the songs and their origins. It is all very interesting and makes the music even more accessible!

*[Wolfgang Giese](#), Musik an Sich*

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Source in German: <https://www.musikansich.de/review.php?id=23233>