

## **Jazzpress (Poland)**

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The New York Second – Music At Night (And Other Stories) Harald Walkate, 2022

Fascinating are the musical stories that grow on the fertile soil of literary fiction, drawing inspiration from the undeniable value of the written word. Such work was accomplished this spring by Dutch pianist, composer and arranger Harald Walkate after encountering a collection of essays by the controversial English novelist, novelist, essayist and poet Aldous Huxley, titled “Music at Night”.

Aldous Huxley, in addition to a number of contributions to culture and the arts, was also known as a promoter of psychoactive drugs, of which he studied mescaline and LSD in particular. What impact such research had on his works is not for me to judge, however, the music it inspired, as performed by the seven-member group The New York Second, certainly does not need any additional aids to take the listener high.

For the recording session, Harald Walkate invited trombonist Vincent Veneman (who shared the stage with Kurt Elling, Herbie Hancock and the band Snarky Puppy), saxophonist Jesse Schilderink, flutist Mark Alban Lotz (known for his collaborations with, for example, Chris Potter, and who also plays with Polish musicians). The lineup of the band also included excellent trumpeter Teus Nobel as a special guest, and the lineup was completed by bassist Thomas Pol and drummer Max Sergeant.

The album consists of nine compositions inspired by stories related to the night which, however, does not mean that we are dealing with a set of recordings that can be recommended to listen to before bedtime. The pianist and leader, accompanied by a rhythm section and a fantastically extended brass section, gives the impression that he is creating the soundtrack to an imaginary movie in real time. The boundless imagination (of the author, the composer and the instrumentalists) allows the music – abounding in original and often technically challenging solutions – to flow freely within its own wild current.

Although we are dealing with a not-inconsiderable lineup of instrumentalists, the recordings cannot be denied excellently balanced proportions, a wide range of genres, or spatiality. Combining contemporary classical, modern jazz and swinging melodies in a delightful way, Harald Walkate manages to move and enchant the listener with a multitude of intimate, intimate passages. Significantly, each of the instrumentalists has numerous opportunities to showcase their unique timbre and personal expression, which undoubtedly enriches the material by giving it additional flavors.

The album comes with a booklet, in which one will find plenty of valuable information about the origins of the album and all of the individual tracks.

All in all, certainly worth your valuable time.