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Jazznytt

Sound and Image

The Jazz Octet The New York Second Creates Sweet Music from Vivian Maier's Photographs

How does one actually visualize the sound of jazz? Is it a recording studio in Oslo in the 70s, is it New Orleans fifty years earlier - or some ice sculptures in Finse last year? Everyone has their immediate associations, but the question is whether the world of yesterday doesn't actually trump almost everything, and especially the world we once called New York City. The city's avenues and streets and skyscrapers still stand, but due to world developments and political trends in other states, it is as if the idea of America has lost some of its romantic luster. Fortunately, skilled musicians can then step in with their great imagination. When the music they create also happens to be based on expressive photographs from "yesterday", it functions as an excellent escape from reality.

The octet The New York Second, led by pianist Harald Walkate and with "our own" man of honor Rob Waring painting images on vibraphone, manages to capture these fleeting moments where one is in contact with urbanity and people. Their second album *Room For Other People* is brilliant ensemble jazz with enough resistance in its delectability that it all feels perfect and effortless. They aren't trying to play "the good old days" and problem-free times. Walkate was talking one day with his colleague Tom Beek, who in addition to playing saxophone with him is also a photographer. They discovered a common love for the powerful photographs that Vivian Maier (1926-2009) left behind, and quickly realized that here lay the seeds of something they could develop creatively.

Photography enthusiasts have been captivated by Maier's photographs - street photographs that have inspired a school of photography, often taken in secret or from a shy distance, in the streets of New York but also from the equally musical Chicago. But inspirational was not exactly what Maier thought she was - she was not overlooked in her time, but only discovered after her death. Then box after box of negatives and photos she had taken over the years materialized. She actually worked as a nanny and indirectly lived a quiet and comfortable life. But for her own pleasure she was also a secret observer. This says something about the intrinsic value of art, and also the joy of imagination and the ability to visualize. Musicians can surely also recognize these impulses.