



Joel Fountain

"Saturn Return"

Sitmom Records 0002

■ REVIEW BY JUSTIN LITUN

"Saturn Return" finds drummer Joel Fountain leading a sextet through a set of his own tunes. Compositionally, Fountain proves he is quite capable. His writing is mature and concise, with a sufficient number of harmonic and melodic diversions to keep one's ear engaged. The album weaves through moods and styles with a sense of purpose and continuity, which is a testament to Fountain's compositional ability. From the lyrical - Nobody - to the eclectic - Please (Don't Ignore Me) - Fountain's writing is compelling and melodic, and he gives his band a lot to work with.

Credit must also be given to Fountain's band for their realization of his compositions. From the outset, these musicians dig into the tunes; the ensemble moves fluidly and effectively together, showing what, to the ear, seems to be an easy rapport between band members. Each of the players sounds comfortable and confident, and the tunes benefit greatly from it. This is perhaps most evident on His Feelinz, on which the ensemble is tight and energetic.

The rhythm section provides a consistently solid point of departure for each tune; Fountain's drumming is tasteful and supportive, and guitarist Noel Johnston is a particularly welcome addition throughout the album - he brings an impressive range of technique to such tunes as Nobody and Saturn Return. Pianist Steve Anderson has a sparse, musical style that suits Fountain's compositions particularly well (he shines as a rhythm section member and as a soloist on Kristamas), and the two bassists on this album, Scott Trayer and Jeff Eckels, are consistently musical. Over this rhythm section, Wayne Delano (saxophones/flute) and Paul Tynan (trumpet/flugelhorn) balance each other nicely. Their playing is succinct and tasteful, demonstrating sensitivity to, and understanding of, the compositions; on Kristamas and Nobody this is clearly in evidence. This is a fine album from start to finish.