

Martti Vesala Soundpost Quintett Stars Aligned



Distant Home

Regardless where trumpet player Martti Vesala may be headed, this is the music that is playing in his head: Classic jazz, melodic without being too easy, funky and yet relaxed, filled to the brim with gripping grooves and ripping solos. It may be music from another era – the 60s and 70s – and its sound may feel worlds apart from the clichés typically associated with Vesala's Finnish home – Nordic melancholia, sad chords, coolly drawn lines. Little wonder, then, that legendary jazz publication *Downbeat* recently compared him to Miles Davis. And yet, thanks to Vesala's drive, passion and virtuosity *Stars Aligned* feels perfectly contemporary.

Already Vesala's previous effort *Helsinki Soundpost* made it clear that the Soundpost Quintet takes priority in Vesala's work. On *Stars Aligned*, he is again treating the limitations of its purely acoustic line-up as challenges, using them to grow both as a performer and composer. After the debut album featured a subtle and almost chambermusical sound, his latest full-length now turns towards something more epic and majestic. If Vesala's gaze was focused inwards and on his roots on *Helsinki Soundpost*, it is now turned upwards, outwards, towards the big stages of the world.

The instantly recognisable production of the album, somewhere between vintage and entirely contemporary sound design, was sculpted by star producer Miikka Huttunen, highly respected for a string of successful Finnish releases from pop to jazz. Astoundingly, all eight minutely detailed arrangements of *Stars Aligned* were taped in a mere three days: The title track with its emotionally ambivalent Leitmotiv and utopian harmonies; experimental study "Murky Green"; and, last but not least, beat-driven pieces like "Driving Force" or "A Murder of Crows", which, with their casually swinging bass-and-drum-loops, are reminiscent of David Holme's classic soundtrack for blockbuster *Ocean's Eleven*.

Although the trumpet takes center stage in all of these pieces, *Stars Aligned* is foremost the triumph of a tightly playing ensemble, which has only recently finetuned its on-stage-communication on a major tour through Finland. For 2018, the rest of the world is now on Vesala's radar. After all, as much as he stands by his Nordic roots, the sound of *Stars Aligned* is his real home. This is the music that is spinning in his head all day – no matter where he's coming from, regardless where he may be headed.