



Martti Vesala Soundpost Quintet

Landmarks



New Nordic Directions

The first three seconds of "Trial by Fire" are an exact replica of the opening chord of the title track to Miles Davis's iconic *Bitches Brew*. It is a statement of intent, a declaration of wanting to go beyond: *"I really intended for the music to sound more Nordic, to give it a sense of calm, longing and space,"* Vesala recalls. *"Over the past years, my compositions have become more rich and colorful, as I'm drawing inspiration from more varied sources."* The results speak for themselves: *Landmarks* is easily Martti Vesala's biggest vision so far.

These inspirations, have sunk in, and turned into vital undercurrents – undercurrents which are more unpredictable, even violent on occasion. Which matches the emotional oscillations of *Landmarks*, always written from an autobiographical perspective during a period of big personal turmoil, of breakups and new found love. Talking Miles again – it's not a single, sustained mood like *Kind of Blue*. It's a rollercoaster ride entirely his own.

"Wild Eyes" (inspired by his love for cats), with its sharp, almost electronic-sounding drums, maps out new territory and briefly aligns the quintet with some of the currents radiating out from the British jazz scene (*"I do like what Matthew Halsall is doing a lot"*, Vesala says). But already on the subsequent "Nightflight Home", a deep, slow-simmering ballad about the fear and elation that change can bring, his Finnish roots come to the fore without ever tapping into worn-out folk clichés.

Everyone in the band has grown, starting with Vesala himself. On "Closer to the surface", his ecstatic solo demonstrates his interest in non-trumpet greats like John Coltrane as part of his never ending quest for expanding his technique, and palette. The progression of Soundpost Quintet as a unit is becoming apparent, too, with the performers gelling tighter than ever while simultaneously excelling as individual instrumentalists. This is still an all-acoustic band – but with both eyes closed, it is hard to tell at times.

There is a telling episode from the time Vesala was searching for a name for the band: *"One of the key pieces of our sound is the acoustic double bass. Inside the body of the instrument, there is a small piece called sound post, which helps to even out the vibration. Inspiringly, this very sound post is sometimes referred to as the âme - the soul."*

It may only be a tiny technical detail to an outsider. To the musicians on *Landmarks*, however, it details like this that are the breath of life infusing and informing every single bar of music.