

A brilliant pianist and a highly original arranger-composer, Yan Pevzner impressed many listeners with his debut jazz CD *State Of Mind* in 2003. *Forward Motion* is a major step forward with complex but logical writing and superior solos that help to define modern jazz of the 21st century.

Born in Russia, Yan remembers, "I was already playing a little piano when I was four. In school I was told that my hands were not coordinated enough to be a pianist so they put me on violin. But after four years of violin I switched back to piano which I knew was my true voice. The first jazz I heard was Oscar Peterson when I was 11 or 12." After undergoing extensive jazz and classical training in France, the pianist moved to New York when he was 22. "I've always played classical music, but I found jazz to be especially challenging. I love the exchange of ideas that happen in real time. Even when one writes a composition, something surprising might happen when the music is being performed. And when you play jazz, you can play anything and draw upon any influence or idea. This way you are always in motion, on a quest to what would be the next melody, chord, phrase..."

Yan graduated with a Master Degree in Jazz Performance and Composition from New York University. An alumnus of the Betty Carter Jazz Ahead program and Mancini Institute, since that time he has performed at many festivals, jazz clubs and concert halls in United States and abroad. He also teaches jazz piano, classical piano and instrumental ensemble at the State University Of New York.

The music on *Forward Motion* was written by Yan Pevzner during the past year, with the full CD being recorded in two days. He utilizes the talents of the members of his regular trio, bassist Martin Wind and drummer Tony Moreno, plus guest soprano-saxophonist Sam Newsome.

Opening the intriguing program, the two-part "West South," which received its name due to Pevzner's interest in both West Coast jazz and Brazilian music, utilizes complex time signatures (at one point 11/8) and a funky feel with a samba being included in the second part. The episodic work has an unpredictable chord structure that keeps on changing while retaining its own logic. Whether soloing or accompanying each other in stimulating fashion, the four musicians each play important roles throughout "West South."

"For 'The Curtain Is Down,' I had the image of a play being over, everyone going home and, behind the curtain, the decorations and scenery being taken down." This wistful ballad is a feature for the trio, with Pevzner showing plenty of emotion as he plays lyrically and engages in close interplay with Wind and Moreno. "Forward Motion" lives up to its name, evolving steadily, building in intensity, and "telling a story."

"'Back Then' is built off of one little idea, one little motif. This piece extended beyond my original vision, with the other musicians making contributions that made the piece a little different." The interplay between soprano and piano is quite impressive with Sam Newsome creating his finest solo of the project and Tony Moreno taking some fine drum breaks. "'Watching Me Leave' is a ballad that I wrote at the piano. At one point in time I was traveling constantly, going to a lot of airports, and it seemed as if everyone was always watching me leave." This tender performance is full of subtle playing by the trio, with bassist Wind's comments behind Pevzner's lead being filled with quiet inventiveness.

“Quiet Force” begins with an out-of-tempo introduction that perfectly sets up the theme and the cooking solos by Newsome, an inspired Pevzner and Moreno. “Twilight” is a tasteful ballad waltz that leads logically to Yan Pevzner’s thoughtful closer, a brief unaccompanied piano solo, “Grace.”

“When I record, I want the music to have a point of view. I use a lot of colors but stay in a certain style. I think of this music as an entity where musical logic and emotions go hand in hand.” Listeners will be pleased to hear Yan Pevzner’s musical vision throughout *Forward Motion*, a memorable and creative set that contains more than its share of musical surprises.

Scott Yanow,
Author of nine jazz books including *Swing, Bebop,*
Trumpet Kings, Jazz On Film and Jazz On Record 1917-76