

***New Shoots* liner notes by Bill Milkowski, June 2015**

Friends and bandmates since their undergraduate days at Princeton University in New Jersey during the mid 1970s, pianist Gary Monheit and fretless electric bass guitarist Dan Krimm have maintained an on-and-off working relationship over the decades that continues to this day. Now both living nearly 3,000 miles from their alma mater, in the San Francisco Bay Area, where they had been playing a regular duo at Yoshi's San Francisco branch up until the prominent jazz club closed last year, Monheit and Krimm have added the versatile Bay Area drummer Scott Amendola to the mix on *New Shoots*, which rekindles their longstanding indelible chemistry, but with a new twist.

"My new tunes from last year break new ground for me," says bassist-composer Krimm, a former classically-trained violinist from Ann Arbor, Michigan who picked up fretless electric bass after being inspired by Jaco Pastorius' self-titled debut album from 1976. Indeed, Krimm is now dealing with more frequent key modulations while continuing to place great emphasis on melody on his originals from *New Shoots* like "Meadowlark," the lightly swinging jazz-waltz that opens the collection, as well as the lovely "Awakening," the introspective "Contemplation" and the vibrant title track. "I think what Bill Evans did with 'Very Early' has some similarities with what I did with 'Meadowlark,'" says Krimm of the lilting opener. "But this is just my kind of angle on it. I love Lydian chords and so I'm doing Lydian and augmented kinds of compound chords...something more my own flavor. It's the kind of stuff that John Scofield and Ralph Towner had been doing back in the '70s. And the harmonic feel of 'Contemplation' is very Ralph Towner-ish to me. One of his old tunes he did with Gary Burton on the *Matchbook* duo album, the opener called 'Drifting Petals,' has a very similar kind of feel."

Keyboardist Monheit, who appeared on Krimm's 1986 debut, *Sentience*, along with special guests Vic Juris on guitar and Marty Fogel on saxophones, contributes four stellar compositions on *New Shoots* that have the highly interactive trio collectively exploring a hard driving swinger ("Misspoke"), a walking blues ("Blues for Terri"), an effervescent heartland-ish number ("Affirmed") and a loping samba flavored romp ("Rambling Green"). A consummate accompanist with a forceful left hand and a deft touch in the right hand, Monheit also shows a sense of harmonic and rhythmic adventurousness in his improvisations, as he demonstrates in his cascading solo on "Meadowlark," his daring extrapolation on the mesmerizing modal number "Misspoke" and his singing solo on "Awakening." His dazzling keyboard work on the propulsive 6/8 number "Rambling Green" is a pianist tour de force while his "Blues for Terri" (named for his wife) is old school in the best sense of the word, with just a twist of Monk coming into his earthy, Junior Mance-Ray Bryant-informed statements.

Throughout *New Shoots*, Krimm affects an exceedingly warm, woody tone on his Pedulla electric bass guitar along with an uncommonly lyrical penchant on his instrument, sounding like a cross between electric bass pioneer Steve Swallow and upright bass master Buster Williams. That deep-toned quality underscores all of the tracks on this appealing trio session, while his extraordinary facility and melodic ingenuity as an improviser provides a flurry of low-end highlights along the way.

Amendola's contribution cannot be overstated here. The in-demand session player and sideman (a charter member of the Nels Cline Singers as well as frequent duo partner of 7-string guitarist Charlie Hunter and leader of his Scott Amendola Band) has an uncanny ability to play just the right thing for any occasion. And his choices, whether it's his sublime brushwork on the delicate "Contemplation," his rolling undercurrent and extended drum solo on "Rambling Green," his buoyantly swinging,

interactive pulse on "New Shoots" or his slick fills on the swaggering "Blues for Terri," always elevate the proceedings.

"Scott's a really fine player and such a great listener," says Krimm. "We only had two serious working rehearsals for this session. We had given him a demo tape of a duet performance and the charts to look at but we only really got together twice for rehearsals before going into the studio. So he put that together on very short order. When I did my other albums in the past, usually the group would be out there gigging and settling things in for several months before going into the studio. But Scott is such a pro that he just jumped right into it and BAM...there it is!"

That this partnership between Monheit and Krimm has not only sustained from their fusion-inspired Princeton days (when they played in a band with tapping guitar sensation Stanley Jordan) but actually grown incrementally, arriving at this new level for the aptly-titled *New Shoots*, is a triumph in these days of dwindling opportunities for jazz musicians.

"It's a very satisfying thing to finally come full circle back to this thing again," says Krimm. "Gary and I had kept in touch through a few letters and emails here and there. I ended up in Santa Monica while Gary was in Santa Barbara but he soon moved up to the Bay Area, and it took me a few years to get there myself, in 2006. It was at that point that we joined a group that was starting up called Fortune Smiles. It was good timing, right place at the right time. And it allowed us to start playing together again."

In 2010, the band recorded *Fortune Smiles*. And now with *New Shoots* they continue the next chapter of their potent partnership. Says Monheit of their indelible chemistry, "We both really appreciate the kind of modal jazz that we were influenced by when we were first learning jazz through recordings by Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett and others. And we found this place where we're pretty comfortable as a duet. We figured out how to accompany each other, which is really a process of listening to each other, finding the sweet spots and providing good support for each other. And Scott Amendola just naturally fits right into that equation."

Regarding his longstanding rapport with Krimm, Monheit adds, "We've known each other for so long that even after long breaks it's kind of like we just pick up from where we left off."

And in the case of *New Shoots*, they pick it up from where they left off on 2010's *Fortune Smiles* and take it to an exciting new level.

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