

DOWNBEAT

JAZZ, BLUES & BEYOND
75
YEARS**Marshall Vente Trio****Marshall Arts**

CHICAGO SESSIONS 01V02

★★½

Marshall Vente displays smoothness and control throughout *Marshall Arts* that reflect his accessibility as an entertainer. Working primarily from a trio setting, Vente stays close to a mainstream foundation that's more about pleasing than challenging his listeners.

The set list consists of Vente's compositions, which mirror influences of vintage bossa nova and Bill Evans to varying degrees, with sophisticated changes supporting tunes that emanate an elegant air. Tempos keep to the medium range, and the rhythm sections simmer rather than sizzle, all of which support Vente's emphasis on rich, clustered harmonies. His chords float and hover in the midrange of the keyboard, played sometimes with a slight edge or spelled as quick arpeggios. Most often, though, they add a cloudy romanticism that defines the feel more so than the spare blowing we get from Vente.

That's not to say that his solos lack substance. On the album's one fairly up, post-bop number, "Centering," he delivers his lines crisply, including a unison articulation of the head with bassist Scott Mason. But when he digs into his solo, after getting past a few Monkish motifs, flashes of uncertainty arise.

Clearly, Vente is not inclined to setting off fireworks for their own sake. Even on the tunes he targets as relatively exotic by bringing in his Tropicale Trio as well as Joe Sonnefeldt to add some steel pan spice, or when he doubles Mason's bowing and Chip Gdalmán's alto flute on "Endless Intensity" in another unison presentation of a theme, his arrangements and their execution are restrained to the point of seeming modest by nature. You could as easily call them tasteful, and they testify to admirable craftsmanship. —Robert Doerschuk

Marshall Arts: A Bill Evans Tune For Ra; Song For The Peshmerga; Black Circle; Bossa '68; Brazilian Folk Song; Samba Into The New Age; Ted's; Endless Intensity; Centering; Pathos 2.75. (61:18)

Personnel: Marshall Vente, piano, electric piano, cuica, Tibetan cymbals, gong; Scott Mason, acoustic bass; Isidro Perez, drums, triangle; Chip Gdalmán, alto flute; Glenn Reitsma, acoustic and electric guitar; Jim Batson, acoustic and electric bass (5-7); Joe Sonnefeldt, steel pan, congas, udu, shaker; Luiz Everling, drums (5-7).

» Ordering info: chicagosessions.com

