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Richard Kamins | Saturday, January 12, 2013



On a recent Amtrak ride down to and back from Washington, D.C., I had the opportunity and joy to listen to "**Museum Vol. 1**" (self-released), the new CD from the **Kevin Harris Project**. For pianist/vocalist/composer/educator Harris, this is his 4th CD featuring the rhythm section of **Kendall Eddy** (acoustic bass) and **Steve Langone** (drums - Ct native **Richie Barshay** replaces Langone on 4 of the 8 tracks) and 2nd to feature tenor saxophonist **Rick DiMuzio** (although he only appears on 2 tracks.) Trumpeter **Jason Palmer** makes his debut as a member of the Project on this CD.

7 of the 8 tracks clock in at over 7 minutes yet this music never feels overdone or boring. Part of the credit for the strength of the program goes to the 2 drummers; Langone drives like mad on the funky "**Pinched Nerve**", shows great imagination on the McCoy Tyner-esque "**The Nile**", kicks heartily on "**BBBB**" and is inventive as well as quiet on the short, impressionistic, ballad "**Bluegrass**". That tune is one of 2 trio pieces, the other being the soulful reading of Bob Marley's "**Redemption Song**". Harris blends acoustic and electric piano. moves the piece away from a reggae rhythm, and makes sure one understands the lyric. Barshay's inventive drumming blends nicely with Eddy's solid bass work (he is a stalwart throughout.) Palmer and the rhythm section are featured in a quartet (no saxophone) reading of Wayne Shorter's "**Prince of Darkness**" (originally recorded on Miles Davis's "Sorcerer" Lp). The group captures the fluidity of composition without aping the Davis Quintet version.

The 4 musicians also play a fascinating version of "**You Are My Sunshine**", which goes through a number of changes after Eddy's solo bass introduces the piece. Harris's unaccompanied piano solo (about 2/3rds of the way through the song) changes the feel and leads to a spirited finish (great drum work from Barshay and smart counterpoint from Eddy.) Langone is the co-composer (with Harris) on the multi-sectioned "**The Dinosaur Suite**" but cedes the drum chair to Barshay. Harris's strong chordal work combines with the powerful rhythm section to support Palmer as he rides atop their fine work. As on "...**Sunshine**", the piano solo changes the direction and intensity of the piece, introducing a new melody leading to a bass solo and a forceful finish.

Giving an album the title of "**Museum**" might make one think that the music is dated or cliched. Instead, Kevin Harris and his compatriots challenge the listener at many turns, erasing any doubts that this music is dull. Everyone plays with great purpose and inventiveness making the music come alive with ideas, melody and rhythm.