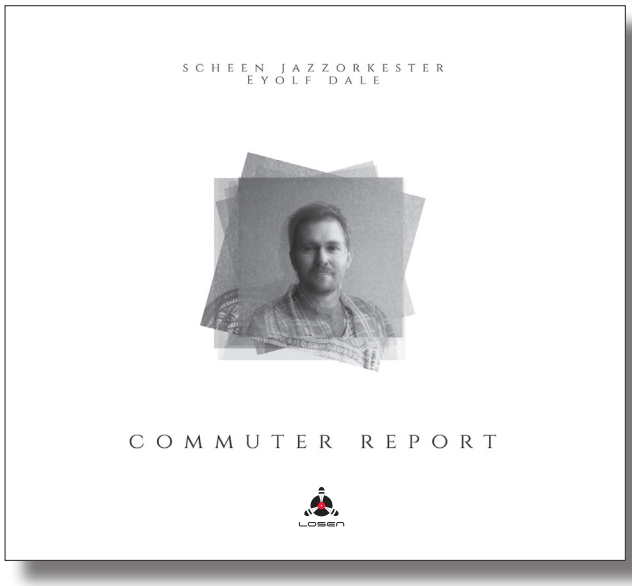

Scheen Jazzorkester & Eyolf Dale – *Commuter Report*

Double Norwegian Grammy nominee, Eyolf Dale (a name that can be translated to 'Wolf Valley') is an exceptionally gifted pianist and composer. He has toured and performed in countries such as the US, China, Japan and extensively in Europe. He is also associate professor in jazz at the Norwegian Academy of Music.

On this utterly charming CD, a commissioned work, he has written for and fronts the professional Scheen Jazz Orchestra based in his hometown of Skien, Norway.

Like many of us, Eyolf commutes to work. During the composition of the album, he became increasingly aware that the music he had written at his studio the day before was now open to fresh insights. In that the music was written in a "short and intensive period", many "compositional solutions were found during the commuting process". Clearly, the journeys from studio to home and back again were giving him the space and time he needed to digest and develop the music. "Every morning when I sat down with my work – I sort of delivered a report on what had happened with the music – a commuter report".

The music on this album is a 'grower'. As it becomes more and more familiar, it becomes more and more gratifying and enjoyable to hear. The pieces are cleverly and creatively constructed with twists and turns drawn from a seemingly never-ending supply of artistic resource. Eyolf's playing is joyous. His pianistic touch is first-class, and his feel for the instrument is intuitive and refined; he makes the piano sing.

On first hearing, I wondered about the seemingly abstract time signatures of some of the pieces. "As a performer, I'm fascinated by odd meters… as a composer though, I'm not focused on meter at all. It's all about images, melody and phrases – certain ideas just are in 9/8 time. But that's often discovered at a later point – not at the moment of creation".

Empty Crowds
A hovering, dreamy opening sequence is followed by an ostinato-based groove. Eyolf: "a 9/8-meter based on a left hand/right hand etude".
The trumpet solo is by Thomas Johansson.

A Certain Kind of Basement Disco
An up-tempo piece with the piano trio playing 'against' the orchestra; not the sort of disco you'll hear at weddings!

Overture
This is a beautifully arranged, quasi-classical, meditative piece with an uplifting tenor sax solo by Jon Øystein Rosland

→

Rhône
Written in a very clear 6/8 time this piece includes delightful solos by Rune Klakegg on accordion and Eyolf.

Commuter Interludes
A captivating piece featuring Eyolf's solo piano.
Commuter Report

A track that gives the trio space to stretch their commuter legs!

Infinite
A beautiful, pensive ballad with Eyolf's piano bathed in brass.

South Drive
A probing and undulating piece in 6/8 time with a heartfelt tenor sax solo by André Kassen.

Wonderific
Eyolf: "7/4 meter – but feels like a crooked backbeat". A wonderific arrangement with outstanding solos by Guttorm Guttormsen on flute and Magne Rutle on trombone.

If only we could all use the drudgery of commuter periods to develop and express our inner artistic feelings, but for now, we can at least refer to the mighty Scheen Jazzorkester and Eyolf Dale's inspirational commuter reports.

David Fishel

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