

Touching Extremes.

www.touchingextremes.org

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Pianist and composer Dave Stapleton loves to write music that's firmly rooted in the 70s, yet manages to sound refreshingly welcome each and every time we approach it. In "The house always wins", the Quintet deploys the talents of Paula Gardiner (bass), Elliott Bennett (drums), Jonny Bruce (trumpet) and Ben Waghorn (reeds), all of them fusing inquisitive assumptions and vivacious intersections with the leader's keyboards in a light-hearted kind of jazz that, despite the evident technical expertise of the musicians, is certainly easy to the ears. This keeps any feeling of decadence or retrogression away, as there seems to be serious passion behind Stapleton's tight arrangements, which include complex metres, hints to Corean fiestas (yes, I mean Chick), absorbing harmonies which could make fans of Mike Westbrook and Graham Collier happy ("Second life" is simply splendid in its autumnal melancholia) and sections that will have one thinking "Canterbury": there's a moment in the title track in which I was almost literally reminded of Egg. In the final selection, a slow blues called "Aquamarine", Julie Tippetts lends her voice to confirm the band's tendency to travel back to their origins. An apparent contradiction reveals instead the group's forte: dealing with the past can produce excellent results without sounding stale, and DSQ are surely doing better things with this stuff than many avant-garde illiterates who believe in their ego-fueled visions but force us to change CD after ten minutes of unnerving boredom.