

Chris Hazelton Trio

Peregrination

Artists Recording Collective ARC-2383

Personnel: Chris Hazelton, Hammond B-3 organ; Danny Embrey, guitar; Kevin Frazee, drums.

Tracks: Harlem Groove, LGE, Achilles Heel, For God So Loved the World, The Sneak, Have You Met Miss Jones, Door Prize, The Groove Starts Here, Weaver of Dreams, Peregrination.

Recorded December 6, 7 and 10, 2011 at Westend Recording Studios, Kansas City, Kansas. Recorded, mixed, and mastered by Brendan McReynolds.

Kansas City may not have the big rep as an organ town, but we do have a long and strong history. Count Basie loved the organ. Wild Bill Davis was from Glasgow, Missouri, and played here. The popular Earl Grant was from KC, as was Big John Patton.



Charles Kynard led a local trio before he hit nationally. And more recently, Greg Meise, Everette DeVan and Ken Lovern have moved the sound forward. And the next generation is in place as well—with Ryan Howard and Chris Hazelton. There is much in common between the blues-and-riffs based Kansas City jazz of the 1930s and the classic Hammond B-3 sounds of the modern era. And that blues and groove thing is still kickin’.

On his new release *Peregrination* (which means a voyage or journey, or the act of travel), Chris Hazelton presents the basic/classic organ trio with guitar and drums on 10 tracks. Joining Chris are two musicians who know the genre well: Danny Embrey and Kevin Frazee.

The opener “Harlem Groove” is by Seleno Clarke, and I’ll guess that Chris learned this during his seasons on the NYC scene (Harlem specifically). The title says it all and Frazee gets that great cooking shuffle going; a Harlem groove for sure. Embrey takes the first solo on the Hazelton original bopper “LGE,” with Chris showing his strong comp chops before making his own melodic solo statement. “Achilles Heel” is also from Hazelton, and is

introduced by a short repeated phrase before settling into a steady four led by Frazee’s cymbal work. Both Chris and Danny have strong clean solos, and comp for a Frazee solo as well.

The other Hazelton originals include the easy funk blues of “The Sneak” (Embrey again has a killer solo), “The Groove Starts Here” (agreed), and the bluesy “Peregrination” (with Chris doing an unaccompanied solo). Embrey has also contributed a tune, “Door Prize,” another groover that features his guitar; the Hazelton chords behind him could be a big band—great color!

The Hammond can do many things tonally, and Hazelton’s normal sound is out of the classic Jimmy Smith school that brought the instrument into the mainstream jazz world. But the instrument can go to church also, as on the beautiful modern hymn “For God So Loved the World,” which gets my vote as the outstanding track in the CD. It’s a gospel ballad and features strong Embrey and Hazelton solos.

The very up-tempo “Have You Met Miss Jones” is a classic of the genre (everyone *flies*), and “Weaver of Dreams,” a song that is a favorite of many in KC—but does seem to know that well elsewhere, but should be—round out the set. “Weaver” is played as a slow ballad here and is gorgeous. Chris opens up a few extra stops on this one.

Peregrination is a super set, with strong contributions from all in this tight trio. Hazelton has selected awesome material, contributed a few originals, and it all works. Chris is another great addition to the Kansas City organ tradition, and those of us who dig this tradition will be in good hands (and feet) for some time, it seems to me.

—Roger Atkinson

Ruskinquartet

11 = 11

Personnel: Brian Ruskin, guitar and vocals; Bree Plaster, drums; Jeremy Johnston, bass guitar; Caleb Aldrich, tenor sax; Heather Thornton, Jade Ryane Philly. Caleb Aldrich, and Jeremy Johnston, background vocals on tracks 4,5,7,8.

Tracks: Speak to Me, New Laces, Nothing on the Radio, What They Say, Uh Oh, Still Forming, A Note

continued