

Phronesis Walking Dark review, Stereophile 2012

If you haven't heard of Phronesis, you probably live in the United States, the most ethnocentric and isolated of the world's jazz markets. Phronesis is one of the hottest new piano trios in Europe. Their previous recording, *Alive*, also on the British label Edition, was named 'Jazz Album of the Year' in several UK polls in 2010.

Individually, each of these guys is capable of wild outbursts of brilliant, creative expression. Neame is the most talented British pianist of his generation, and Hoiby is a riveting bass soloist in the great Danish tradition of Niels-Henning Orsted-Pederson and Mads Vinding. But what is important about Phronesis is that they are a 'band', with a concept. They all compose fresh, intriguing song forms. Their pieces are cleverly, completely orchestrated, with roles specified for each player, and they knock you down with their grooves.

If that sounds cut-and-dried, it is anything but. The tight arrangements make it more exciting and more meaningful when someone breaks loose. Hoiby's title track is a circular piano pattern over a quick, sweeping bass line. You don't feel it coming when Neame spills out of the structure and flies. In Eger's 'Democracy', all three players solo independently and make a startling yet coherent blend. Coherence is a strength of Phronesis – for all their free-spirited edginess, there is a clarity to their collective designs.

Engineer August Wanngren provides a lucid, beautifully balanced sonic portrait of this trio, especially considering that Hoiby's powerful bass is stage front in the mix.

Thomas Conrad