

## Phronesis Walking Dark review, Ottawa Citizen 2012

With its fourth release, the based-in-the-U.K. band Phronesis continues to drill deep into its singular sound.

Walking Dark is a consistent collection of very smart and very contemporary piano trio music, rich with ornate, complex original material that would afford jazz nerds-in-training many hours of happy analysis. Would you expect anything less that keen rhythmic, harmonic and melodic sophistication from a band whose name is Greek for wisdom and intelligence?

However, it's the dynamism and fluidity of Phronesis' live and in-studio performances that make the group captivating rather than simply impressive at the instrumental level. Here is the group, which consists of Danish bassist Jasper Hoiby, British pianist Ivo Neame and Swedish drummer Anton Eger tearing through the drummer's tune Zieding at last summer's Montreal International Jazz Festival: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=2NixR2GIGac](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=2NixR2GIGac)

Over 12 tracks, Walking Dark is filled with lots of well-crafted, high-energy lyricism, the result of perfectly balanced contributions by each band member. The music's often dense and busy — bassist Hoiby is never one to lay back into the proceedings, and drummer Eger's approach is to advance the music with plenty of splashy clattering and tumbling on his kit with a distinctive, muffled tuning. However, the degree to which the music's been internalized makes it come through loud and clear.

I like Hoiby's plaintive but gutsy Upside Down, which finds beauty in an asymmetrical groove and features Neame and the bassist frolicking in tandem. The Economist may be a staid magazine, but it's also the title of drummer Eger's brash tune, which grabs listeners with punchy, ascending chords and some of Hoiby's best bass heroics. The bassist's brushes-driven Suede Trees features Eger's generating great intensity and Neame's Charm Defensive contributes to the patient, brooding quality of the CD. The band goes out swinging, albeit in 5/4, on Hoiby's post-Mehldau tune Eight Hours, which also appeared on the group's previous disc, Alive.

I've complained in the past that we on this side of the pond don't know enough about the U.K. jazz scene in part because some labels don't see value in reaching out to events and journalists here to raise the profile of their artists. Phronesis, however, is making the push to be known on this side of the Atlantic Ocean, and its dynamic and lucid music more than justifies the effort.