

Phronesis 'Alive' review, Jazz Journal 2010

'Phronesis' is the 'term used by Aristotle to describe actions rooted in common sense, or practical wisdom. After listening to Hoiby's trio at this year's Gateshead International Jazz Festival, the only thing that seemed to defy common sense was that the group's reputation remained so relatively modest. Their sophisticated, uplifting and ridiculously cohesive music was musical phronesis personified.

Recorded over two nights at The Forge Art Venue in London, *Alive* draws for the most part on material from the earlier discs, *Organic Warfare* and *Green Delay* (Loop 2007 & 2009). Hoiby, a Dane who has lived and worked in London for around a decade, is a virtuoso of the Holland/Vitous class, whilst the multi-talented Neame (who also plays alto sax with Jim Hart's Gemini) is a gifted pianist rooted in the Hancock/Corea/Jarrett schools. Regular drummer Anton Eger couldn't make this engagement, though Mark Guiliana (Avishai Cohen's regular drummer) was invited to plug the gap and seizes the reins with aplomb.

From the opening bars of *Blue Inspiration* it's clear that these guys mean business. They're never afraid to rhapsodise and groove, and a superficial kinship to E.S.T. dissipates somewhat during the freer and more turbulent passages. *Abraham's New Gift*, perhaps the disc's great showstopper, typifies the Phronesism approach. Hoiby's propulsive bass line, accented by Neame's driving left-hand ostinato, gives way to a clean, elegant melody. A controlled dissolve into free improvisation follows, before Neame, in no great rush, carves out a powerfully swinging solo. Driven relentlessly forwards by Hoiby and Guiliana, the killer ostinato eventually returns, this time framing a wraparound drum solo.

Each piece is a shape-shifting delight, and you'd be hard pressed to find any longeurs. Notwithstanding Kit Downes's Mercury nomination for *Golden* (Basho 2009), *Alive* may yet prove to be the best UK jazz release of the year.

Fred Grand