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## KATAHDIN'S EDGE BRINGS TENSION AND DRAMA TO JAZZ LANDSCAPE

WILLIE MYETTE, JOHN FUNKHOUSER, AND MIKE CONNORS have the kind of pedigree that would lend itself to astonishing and unexpected results. Their debut together as Katahdin's Edge is exactly what you'd expect from three adventurous performers, and nothing like you've heard before.

Step Away, the band's inaugural CD brings profound drama and depth to what is normally a very predictable jazz format: the trio. Myette, the group's voice on piano, proved he had a flair for melody and arranging on ... *this is jazz*, his bow as a bandleader. Funkhouser, whose name couldn't be more appropriate for a bass player, also leads his own band FunkHouse and has toured throughout the U.S., Asia, and France. Drummer Mike Connors has played with the likes of Joe Hunt and Alan Dawson, as well as with neo-lounge experimentalists Combustible Edison.



Both Myette and Funkhouser have extended educations in jazz, with Myette attending the Berklee College of Music and Funkouser the New England Conservatory. Myette launched the successful JazzKids program, a fully developed instructional jazz piano program for children. Funkhouser also headed the Jazz Studies Department at Manhattanville College. He currently teaches at Berklee. The band clearly knows its music, and on Step Away it really shows.

It doesn't take long for the drama to kick. The title cut, begins with an almost acid-jazz rhythm track running under everything like white water, while Myette swims atop it with his fleet and beautiful piano hooks. The piece demands the listener's attention, and keeps it for the entire disc, though cinematic tunes like "Engima" and the Guaraldi-esque "Zargonic Effect." Throughout the album, the performances such as these often extend beyond the commonplace and into the sublime.

Myette is a clean, athletic, occasionally dark pianist who learned his craft in part from pianist/icon Fred Hersch. Connors is a muscular drummer who knows how to push the boundaries of tradition and when to abide by them. Funkhouser is, like his name, funky and nimble fingered on bass, with plenty of room to roam in these exciting arrangements without losing his support of the trio's often breathless tempos.

It wouldn't be a stretch to call Katahdin's Edge's Step Away a work that is, well, a "step away" from something truly remarkable, even brilliant. As it stands, it is no less than a bold, virtuosic artistic statement and an exhilarating ride through some of the year's most dramatic jazz.