



Katahdin's Edge *Step Away* (Incline) Jazziz—June 2005



Katahdin's Edge combines the talents of pianist and composer Willie Myette, bassist John Funkhouser, and drummer Mike Connors in a hard-charging trio that nods to tradition while keeping an eye on the horizon. On *Step Away*, the threesome unself-consciously updates the time-tested piano trio format with a fresh perspective.

Step Away starts out with Connors and the appropriately named Funkhouser laying down a slinky funk groove on the title track before Myette enters with his dense and percussive piano attack. The pianist's staccato approach is more NPR theme than AACM avant-garde, but it nonetheless builds tension and retains the spikiness the band's name evinces. Funkhouser's bass sounds as resonant and woody as if he had nailed his

strings to a giant sequoia, and his nimble solos, as on the skittering "Enigma," never fail to engage.

Myette also shows a facility for ballads, which often refuse to remain quiet and polite, as on "Wagons of the Night," a lovely melody that builds to a satisfying crescendo before winding back down. Myette's compositions twist and turn and shift tempos, but never haphazardly, and what begins introspectively may wind up in improvisational free-fall.

And vice versa. On the dazzling "Zargonic Effect," the trio jumps out of the gate with a romping, almost Eastern European vamp that somehow dissolves into a quiet piano solo, increases in intensity as the bass and drums return, and finally returns to the infectious vamp.

With playing this good and writing this strong, Myette, Funkhouser and Connors manage to pull off the tricky feat of sounding of their time, yet not limited to it.

— Bob Weinberg



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