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LEAGENTIS

To be released in October on the F-IRE label's F-IRE Presents series, the Alex Hutton Trio's Legentis is Hutton's long awaited third album. Alex Hutton has long been one of the brightest stars on the piano firmament, with a string of credits with most of the top players on the jazz scene as long as - well, how long is a piece of string? His music has always been something special, as witnessed on his previous releases Cross That Bridge and Songs From The Seven Hills. With Legentis, Hutton has come up with something extra special and firmly claims his long deserved spot in the very top rank of UK jazz pianists.

The line-up of the Alex Hutton Trio has changed for Legentis, with Yuri Goloubev coming in on bass and Asaf Sirkis on drums. This line-up is sheer perfection for Hutton, as well as for this album, with Goloubev's strongly classically-informed, yet lyrical style and Sirkis's incredible versatility and adaptability that, although leaning toward fusion, can fit into anything. Goloubev is one of the leading world-class bassists, and Sirkis, as one of the world's premier drummers, needs no introduction. Thus, the present line-up of the Alex Hutton Trio constitutes a real class act.

Special guests on selected tracks are the incomparable Heidi Vogel, wordless vocals, and Jim Rattigan on the rarely heard french horn and Keith Thompson on the equally, perhaps even more, rarely heard cor anglais (and that's counting in its cousin the oboe) and flute. If you didn't know the credits (as I did not when first hearing my early promo), you are immediately struck by the wordless vocals of the opening track, J J, and Cleo Lane springs to mind. This could only be one voice then, Heidi Vogel, and thus it is indeed. Ms. Vogel's vocals on this and the title track, The Legentis Script, are as distinctive as ever and are a considerable contribution to these two tracks, and indeed to the album as a whole.

All nine tracks of Legentis are Alex Hutton originals. The music is something quite extraordinary. Taken as a whole, it is very cinematic, and in spite of the small trio setting almost symphonic, the through-composed material is utterly enchanting and explored thoroughly with both energy and delicacy, evoking a wide range of emotions yet remaining predominantly optimistic, even joyous. Like Hutton's previous albums, Legentis follows something of a grand narrative. The textures seem remarkably complex, even luxurious, at times for such a small setting. While there is a strong underpinning of eminently dance-like grooves, the melodies have a prominent northern European feel to them, and throughout, Legentis is coloured by Hutton's wide range of influences, from classical through to post punk-folk (J J is named for and inspired by Stranglers bassist Jean-Jacques Burnel - its opening bars already establishing a very Stranglers-like colour and mood) and beyond. All this is underlined by some truly outstanding and exciting soloing all round.



The overall result is very powerful, totally mesmerising and extremely beautiful. From the opening bars, one just knows this is something extra special. I couldn't help but fall instantly in love with Legentis. Not only brilliantly consistent, this album is brilliant, period. There can be no question as to whether Legentis is compelling - it is far beyond this, it is downright hypnotic and totally absorbing in its brilliance and beauty, utterly captivating.

The excellent artwork by Alban Low for the liner deserves special mention. This is taken from Low's graphics for the - likewise excellent - video for J J. (Available on YouTube.) It fits this album to a 't' and works far better than any photograph could have done.

The Alex Hutton Trio's Legentis is an absolute must have - buy, or if necessary beg, steal or borrow! It is way beyond essential in any kind of jazz collection or, for that matter, any good music collection. Legentis also has to be probably the strongest contender yet this year for a Parliamentary Jazz Award and more. I would be very surprised - nay, shocked! - if this brilliant album were to miss out on this.