

Jan Granlie, Salt Peanuts, 10 Nov 2023
(translated from Norwegian):

We have already given pianist Georg Ruby and singer Sascha Ley an excellent review for their project Village Zone - Saluti a Peppino. And now we get to know these two extremely creative souls as a duo, with contributions from bassist Stephan Goldbach in Kurt Weill's and Ira Gerswin's "My Ship".

These are two very creative musicians who, on this release, mix their own compositions with better-known standards, which they transform into their own, extremely exciting versions.

However, it takes me a while to come to terms with the fact that an entire album is sung in German. German is a language that works in the cabaret tradition and in the TV series Babylon Berlin, but as a jazz language it takes some getting used to. But here everything is performed in German when Ley is not using her voice for scating or modern vocal art, not far removed from what Randi Pontoppidan or Greetje Bijma do.

They begin with Cole Porter's "Love for Sale", which is called "Gern bereit" in the German version, with German lyrics by Hildegard Knef, to whom the entire album is dedicated. She became famous through her collaboration with Cole Porter, whose version of "Shiny Stockings" is legendary. And although I was still a little skeptical at the beginning of "Love for Sale", they were able to convince me relatively quickly that it works. And that's mainly because they make the standards their own, with excellent and original piano playing and extremely exciting vocals, which are creaky one moment, a bit operatic and cabaret the next, before suddenly switching to driving and hard vocals. In between, the two perform in a kind of spoken chorus, accompanied by Ruby's incredibly creative piano playing. Five of the lyrics are by Hildegard Knef, and on "Eisblumen", Ruby's solo number, he is also the main singer who performs Knef's lyrics. And when they end with "Ich glaub', ne Dame werd ich nie (The Lady is a Tramp)" by Rodgers/Hart with lyrics by Knef, I have the feeling that I have gained an insight into a new part of jazz that absolutely fascinates me.

Some of the songs are by German composers, such as Peter Kreuder and Rudi Schuricke, Ralf Maria Siegel and Aldo von Pinelli, Werner R. Heyman and finally Theo Mackeben. And it's possible that these are familiar songs to a German, but I don't know them from before, so the disc may be even more original and exciting for someone who is well versed in the history of German music.

This has become a very exciting release, which is different from most of what is coming onto the market these days. I see the whole release as a kind of cabaret or theater piece in which the two of them take us on a journey into a musical landscape that I find very German. And where creativity is at the forefront and where they make the music modern and contemporary, with extremely creative and fine piano playing and with a singer who is an artist with the use of the voice. An original, creative and strong release.

(<https://salt-peanuts.eu/record/georg-ruby-sascha-ley/>)