



CD Reviews

Eighty-Eights

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ARMEN DONELIAN

Full Moon Music (Grand Ideas Vol. 3) (Sunnyside)

Donelian's Grand Ideas each employ solo piano: Vol. 1 focused on standards; Vol. 2, original compositions. But Full Moon Music tackles free improvisation. The 14 mostly brief pieces are laden with atmosphere, draped in misty impression, brooding chords and suggestive melodic shards that offer more clues as to Donelian's influences (modern classical is the elephant in the room) than to any specific musical point of view. Although signpost jazz elements of either extreme seem to be the last thing on his mind—he avoids Cecil Taylor-esque effusions with the same diligence that he rejects conventional mainstream ploys—this Armenian expatriate ultimately brings off this slippery-to-classify program in style.

At times meandering and diffuse—it comes naturally with the territory—Full Moon Music ultimately wins you over—that is, if you surrender yourself to Donelian's solipsistic, dartingly lyrical ruminations. And could anyone but a Eurasian improviser still in touch with his regional roots get away with titling a track "Young Asses at Play"?

-Steve Futterman