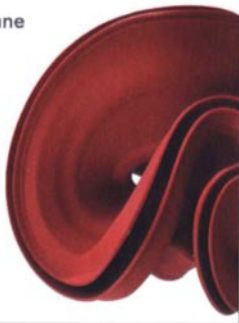


Downbeat (US)

February 2013

Josef Woodard

Walter Norris & Leszek Mozdzer ACT
The Last Set
Live at the A-Trane



Walter Norris & Leszek Mozdzer

The Last Set

ACT 9540

★★★★½

Besides being one of the finer jazz piano duo albums in recent memory, this meeting of bright and probing pianistic minds also serves to cast due attention on two players deserving more credit and ears.

Leszek Mozdzer is a dynamic and sensitive Polish pianist, while Walter Norris, who passed away in 2011, was one of the greatest and smartest American—or at least American-born, having lived in Europe for years—jazz pianists on the scene, his relative obscurity notwithstanding. Those who knew, knew, and are beautifully reminded with this live recording.

On Nov. 2, 2008, the mutually admiring and musically empathetic pair lived up to an idea to perform together, at the jazz haunt the A-Trane, in Norris' adopted home of Berlin. *The Last Set*, cleanly recorded and beautifully played and intuited by the duo, serves as a valuable document of that meeting,

Mozdzer originals frame the set, from the opening classically tinged character of "Tactis" to the ruminative, concentrically harmonic piece "Tsunami," more about the artful, gradual build and ponder than thunderous energies. Tunes from Norris' intriguing songbook include the hard-bopping turf of "From Another Star" and "Spider Web" and the self-evident introspective glow of "Reflective." Outside of their own compositional space, the pianists meet and gently soar on the by-now classic yet still quixotic strains of Wayne Shorter's "Nerfertiti." By contrast, that tune is followed by an alternately abstract and saucy treatment of Norris' brainy blues number "Postscript Blues."

Throughout the set, we get the palpable sense of two compatible and like-minded modern jazz pianists reveling in each other's powers and creating that certain third collective "voice" between their individual input.

—Josef Woodard

The Last Set: Tactis; From Another Star; Head Set Trance; Reflective; Spider Web; Nefertiti; Postscript Blues; Tsunami. (51:15)

Personnel: Walter Norris, piano; Leszek Mozdzer, piano.

Ordering info: actmusic.com