

Pianists continue to lead Modern Jazz in a direction that explores the future without letting go of the past. They find creative ways to express ideas that align themselves with the present. Contemporary in concept, and yet traditional in many ways, the modern pianist has a world of creative Jazz at his fingertips...

(3) features the Toby Koenigsberg Trio in a modern mainstream program that includes original works as well as those of pioneers such as Bud Powell and Bill Evans. Based in Oregon and working cohesively as old friends will do, the trio offers creative forays into Jazz's core. Two brief interpretations of "Stella by Starlight" serve to demonstrate the unique approach that the pianist and his trio apply to their work. Nothing is straightforward. Everything comes with a deep sense of adventure. Koenigsberg uses a percussive approach to the piano that drives his trio with energy. He likes to drive from the keyboard with a convincing aura that says, "We are here to deliver an exotic message that you've never heard before." Even the happy Bill Evans piece, "Show Type Tune," comes with an overcoat of hard-driving enthusiasm. The pianist pushes hard. "My Foolish Heart" is interpreted in its lush ballad semblance with a piercing quality. Overlaying harmonic ideas fluidly, the pianist rolls this one out slowly with passion. The trio is at its best with faster numbers such as Bud Powell's "Oblivion" and "So Sorry Please," which find the threesome exploring tastefully in a flurry of creative strength. Comfortable, and yet confronted with a three-pronged attack from this well balanced trio, the music swings with a creative edge.

Jim Santella