



## **COBBLESTONE JAZZ**

### **The Modern Deep Left Quartet !K7258CD**

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Two and a half years after their debut LP, *23 Seconds* dazzled critics and lit up dance floors worldwide, Cobblestone Jazz are back with a powerhouse new album that captures their live-in-the-studio energy like never before. A mixture of heady, jazz-inspired house grooves and below-the-belt analog funk, it raises the bar for electronic dance music in 2010.

Titled *The Modern Deep Left Quartet*, the record marks an important addition to the Cobblestone Jazz lineup, as the trio of Mathew Jonson, Danuel Tate and Tyger Dhula brings aboard Colin de la Plante (aka the Mole). De la Plante is no newcomer to the Cobblestone crew: the four musicians have been playing together for nearly 15 years, since their first performances in small-town Victoria, British Columbia, and they've all shared the stage as the Modern Deep Left Quartet. (In 2005, they also recorded an EP for the band's Wagon Repair label, which is also responsible for the vinyl release of *The Modern Deep Left Quartet*.) Now, using the moniker as their new album title, the band officially anoints de la Plante a full-time member of the studio lineup.

The band recorded the album during three intense weeks over the summer. With Jonson and de la Plante living in Berlin and Tate and Dhula holding down the fort in Victoria, they stay on top of their game by touring once every other month, taking advantage of downtime between gigs to rehearse and record in their Berlin studio. "Rehearse" and "record" actually mean virtually the same thing for Cobblestone Jazz: their method is spontaneous, in part because their gear requires it. There's no saving patches with the analog machines like theirs—antiques like the TR-808, TR-909 and SH-101; newfangled headscratchers like Cwejman and Doepfer modular synths; strange, custom-built doohickeys of uncertain purpose; and of course Tate's trusty vocoder and Fender Rhodes.

Tracks begin from scratch and develop across freeform jam sessions that often see day turning into night (and sometimes, back to day—and back to night.) The final mix is done in real-time, with three of the four musicians spread out across a semi-circle of machines, attacking all the buttons, knobs and faders they can handle, yelling out the changes, filtering and looping on the fly. At the same time, Tate lays down his Rhodes solos and accompaniments in one shot. If the band doesn't like a given take, they do it again.

Rather than making the music busier, the extra set of hands has finessed it even further. All the staples of the Cobblestone Jazz sound are there: subtly swinging machine beats, mindbending arpeggios, Detroit-inspired chord progressions and, of course, powerful bass lines that roll like beads of quicksilver. But the sound of *The*

*Modern Deep Left Quartet* is unusually fluid, open and nuanced. In marked contrast to today's hypercompressed, digitalist dance music, this is a sound that breathes like no other. The more deeply you listen, the more hidden details you'll hear.

Album opener "Chance Dub" sets the record's tone with gently cycling chords, trim drum programming and heavy sub-bass: a seductive take on modern house, with an almost Zen-like sense of calm. Tempos ratchet up a notch with "Sun Child," a slab of classic techno-jazz slicked with sliding bass action and subliminal vocal loops; Tate's Rhodes solo beams like a Balearic Herbie Hancock.

"Mr. Polite" wears one hell of a devilish grin: it comes on like a Cheshire cat, beginning with a leering bass-and-drums bump and eventually fleshing out into a fat groove stuffed with eerie pads, weird effects and a fuzzed vocal refrain that just won't quit. True to its title, "Cromagnon Man" is machine funk at its most primal, hammering away at bone-dry snares and a tough, leathery bass line.

The album's heaviest cut, "Fiesta" will be familiar to anyone who heard its acidic sequences turn clubs to mush throughout 2009. Reprised from Cobblestone Jazz's *Traffic Jam* EP, it's a maelstrom of controlled mayhem, swirling with slippery arpeggios and vocoder strains. The hypnotic "Children," is comparatively subdued, with muted bass chords and vocal shots bouncing over a shaker-heavy rhythm. But it's quicker, too, and somehow unusually self-assured; you might even say optimistic.

"Chance," the vocal version of the album's opening track, takes Cobblestone Jazz as deep into song-form as they've ever gone. Over nimble bass/drums interplay, Tate's Rhodes solo shows a rare degree of elegance and lyricism. "Midnight Sun" closes things out with a significant change in direction, slowing down to 95 BPM to dive into a dubby fantasia of slo-mo disco, Latin shuffle and otherworldly synthesizers—proof that Cobblestone's steps extend far beyond four-to-the-floor. Follow along as they go modern, deep and far to the left.

Written by Philip Sherburne

## **TRACKLISTING**

1. Chance Dub - 7.42
2. Sun Child - 7.40
3. Mr Polite - 7.01
4. Cromagnon Man - 5.03
5. Fiesta - 5.52
6. Children - 6.09
7. Chance - 7.59
8. Midnight Sun - 6.23

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