



Nouveau Stride: Fourteen by Nouveau Stride (2013)

By C. MICHAEL BAILEY, Published: April 19, 2013



Composing lyrics to established jazz standards—those jazz instrumental compositions that have become established in the Canon, “Thelonious Monk’s “Round Midnight” is the most famous example—is an artform all its own. Classic composers/interpreters include Eddie Jefferson, Babs Gonzales, King Pleasure (Clarence Beeks) and Jon Hendricks. There have been recent vocalese contributions made by a new generation that includes most recently Dorian Devins (*The Procrastinator* (Self Produced, 2013)).

Nouveau Stride is vocalist/lyricist Lorraine Feather and pianist Stephanie Trick. Feather, well known for her clever and inventive lyrics (*Tales of the Unusual* (Jazzed Media, 2012)). She plies her special trades here with the rich tradition of stride piano playing. That is where Trick comes in, being a young precocious virtuoso of such a piano style. And all of the great Harlem stride players are represented: James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, Duke Ellington (yes, Duke Ellington) and Willie “The Lion” Smith. The project is studiously ambitious, with Trick practiced to a high shine and Feather having done her homework on the book.

In her homage to Trick, Feather opines:

Now you know you can play stride,
Even though you about died, And my song is about you
And the torture you went through
Head on down to the piano bar
Start off with “All The Things You Are”
Then a little ditty by James P,
Show ‘em you can pour on the heat.

And Trick does so on Johnson's “Carolina Shout” where she nimbly dispatches the piece *con brio* as the rare instrumental. Trick and Feather’s adaptation of Willie “The Lion” Smith’s “Spanish Rag” as “The Tango Lesson” reveals its skeleton to be equal parts ragtime, Louis Moreau Gottschalk and stride, with clever, clever words:

I'd cash my paycheck, blow off my bills
Spend every cent on terpsichorean thrills —
Red dress of Lycra with satin frills,
Music that would sate my soul.

Indeed.

Track Listing: Pour On the Heat; Bat Boogie; New York City Drag; Rules of the Park; Vive Le Boogie Woogie; Dreamily; Let's Do This; Pretzel Man (the Contortionist); Imaginary Guy; Carolina Shout; The Tango Lesson; The Ride; Timeless Rag; California Street.

Personnel: Lorraine Feather: vocals and lyricist; Stephanie Trick: piano.

Record Label: Self Produced