



SCOTT KINSEY: Kinesthetics

by John Kelman, *AllAboutJazz*

Given Legacy's recent release of the retrospective Weather Report box [Forecast: Tomorrow](#), keyboardist Scott Kinsey's debut as a leader couldn't come at a better time. Most emerging pianists cite Corea, Evans, Hancock and Jarrett as influences, so it's refreshing to hear someone whose primary reference point is Weather Report co-founder Joe Zawinul. Kinsey, like Zawinul, possesses formidable chops, but he's equally interested in the orchestral possibilities of technology in real-time improvised settings.

Kinsey has been one of the driving forces behind Tribal Tech, joining shortly after graduating from Berklee in 1991. But he's also explored other avenues with saxophonist Bob Belden, trumpeter Tim Hagans and guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel. Kinesthetics is the sum of Kinsey's experiences to date. Its potent grooves mix with sounds that, despite being clearly electronic, feel wholly organic. Delineated solos exist throughout but all within the context of an interactive collective.

What's most remarkable is that the majority of Kinesthetics was recorded in just two days with a cast of twenty including Hagans, woodwind multi-instrumentalist Steve Tavaglione, percussionist Brad Dutz and drummer Kirk Covington. While the individual personalities come through, Kinsey's well-developed sonic approach defines the record. Kinsey's writing style ranges from spare to complex but always affords his players as much freedom as possible.

Percussion-heavy tracks like "Kinesthetics," "This is That" and "Big Rock" all bear Zawinul's unmistakable world music stamp, but avoid strict imitation in their more collaborative approach. While Zawinul has to a large extent left the jazz world behind, it remains a clearer harmonic component for Kinsey. With Tavaglione, Kinsey's only constant partner on the record, Kinesthetics suggests where Weather Report might have gone had Zawinul and saxophonist/co-founder Wayne Shorter continued on and allowed Shorter's change-based writing to balance out Zawinul's disposition for powerful grooves. "Quartet" swings in its own way while "Wishing Tree"—one of three tracks partially or completely sourced from a December, 2004 live performance—is more textural, a completely improvised but focused duet featuring Kinsey's multiplicity of textures and Tavaglione's tenor.

Kinsey describes his approach to writing as coming up with lines and ideas, then seeing where the band can take them. But as much melodic ideas drive the band, so too do astute sonic choices. What makes technology a valid and equal partner is Kinsey's ability to come up with innovative sounds on the fly. Even dog barks can be musical in Kinsey's world. "Uncle Pat's Gypsy Van"—partially sourced from the same live performance—may revolve around a simple, hypnotic eight-note phrase, but Kinsey's aural landscape gives Covington and Tavaglione plenty to work with.

There's no shortage of muscular playing. Kinsey doesn't completely subscribe to Zawinul's "everybody solos and nobody solos" aesthetic, but it does inform much of Kinesthetics. Still, with a broader set of references, Kinesthetics is an album that, with its continuous arc, appealing grooves and occasionally knotty but always appealing melodies, is one of the year's best fusion efforts.

Track Listing: Kinesthetics; This is That; Sometimes I...; The Combat Zone; Quartet; Wishing Tree; Big Rock; Uncle Pat's Gypsy Van; Under Radar Intro; Under Radar; Shinjuku; One for Jinshi.

Personnel: Scott Kinsey: keyboards, piano, melodica, vocoder, VP-1; Steve Tavaglione: tenor and soprano saxophones, C and alto flute, Bb and bass clarinets, EWI (1-10,12); Michael Landau: guitar (12); Jinshi Ozaki: guitar (4); Tim Hagans: trumpet (4,12); Walt Fowler: trumpet (3); Jimmy Earl: bass (4,8,11); Gary Willis: bass (2); Abraham Laboriel Sr.: bass (3,10); Armand Sabal-Lecco: bass (7,10); Robert Hurst III: bass (5); Paul Shihadeh: bass (1,12); Brad Dutz: percussion (1,4,7,9,10); Alex Acuna: percussion (2); Arto Tunçboyacıyan: percussion (2); Satnam Ramgotra: percussion (10); Kirk Covington: drums (1-3,7-10,12); Cyril Atef: drums (3,4,8); Vinnie Colaiuta: drums (5); Ronald Brunner, Jr.: drums (11).