

Billband: Blurred

Innova 609 — Time: 32:24

One complaint your reviewer has against some Downtown music is its excruciating length. Coupled with obsessive, often undeveloped material, the result can be numbing to brain and posterior alike. Credit New York-based composer Bill Ryan with penning fare in this vein that combines polished workmanship with knowing when enough's enough.

The four selections on this release, *Original Blend*, *Capacity 49*, *Blurred*, and *Drive* are scored for modified jazz combo and are built from brief gestures presented in patterns that are often subtly varied in length and phrasing. With its static repeated single-pitch platform and somewhat more process style concert music feel, *Blurred* recalls Terry Riley's *In C* and Steve Reich's 1970s oeuvre. Its sound world is fetchingly atmospheric. The other items here are more bubbly, extroverted, and jagged with extended sections of drum kit backing, all helping demonstrate a more obvious kinship to jazz; mainly because of the prominent percussion, all have an infectious toe-tapping immediacy that imparts immense surface appeal to crafty inner workings. All four tracks contain plenty of dynamic shading, strongly varied textures, and a somewhat loose yet highly convincing feel for architecture. And all have a good sense of when to stop – Ryan never outstays his welcome.

Performances are terrific. Billband, consisting of David Cossin (drums), Wayne DuMaine (trumpet), Steve Gosling (piano), Michael Lowenstern (bass clarinet), Todd Reynolds (violin), and Taimur Sullivan (saxophones) play with a bright, compelling sound and exhibit machine precision tightness. Editing is flawless and sonics are wonderfully vibrant. Some listeners may object to this CD's comparatively short duration, coming in at slightly more than half an hour – but this critic was left happy yet hungry for more, not feeling cheated. Here is a disc that is a must for everyone, especially lovers of Downtown styles.