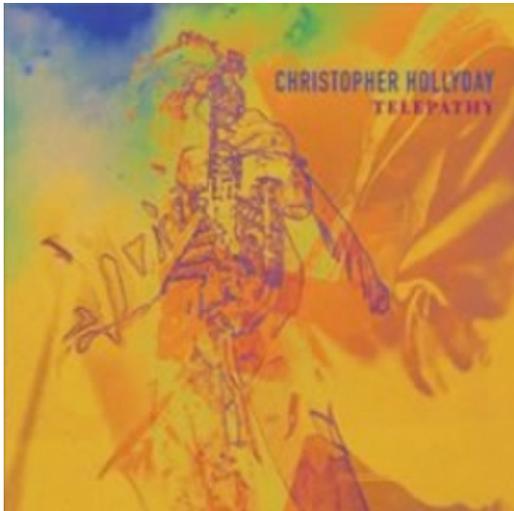


Christopher Hollyday



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Telepathy Liner Notes: Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines Intuition as "the power of knowing things without conscious reasoning." Alto saxophone master Christopher Hollyday shares this ability with four other simpatico musicians, hand-picked for this date from the cream of the Southern California mainstream on his first release in more than 25 years.

People in the know will remember Hollyday from his youthful days tearing it up on the Boston bebop scene, a time memorialized in the documentary film *A Place for Jazz*. Hollyday was such a prodigious talent, he went through three distinct phases of "young lion-hood," alongside cats like Wynton Marsalis and Marcus Roberts before he reached the age 21.

He is circumspect in his recollection of those times. "It got to be a drag because they all talked about how young I was, you know 'the youngest cat to ever play the Village Vanguard.' I didn't really care about all that."

Looking back though, there are fond memories. "One thing we all had in common was being dead-serious about the music. We were into the history. We paid attention to what our mentors demonstrated about how to uphold the tradition while we were expanding it with our own thing."

His major label debut on RCA/Novus found Hollyday fronting an all-star quintet featuring Wallace Roney on trumpet, Cedar Walton on piano, David Williams on bass and Billy Higgins on drums. He would record 3 more albums for the company.

Then, radio silence.

What happened?

"Nobody was calling me up, asking me if I wanted to make a record!" Hollyday recalls with a quick laugh. "I wasn't getting approached by the labels and I really didn't have the drive to put out a record on my own. Until now."

Hollyday got married and moved with his wife to San Diego in 1996, where he began a long career as a music educator in North County. About five years ago, he quit and began the process of re-establishing his presence as a performer-- often appearing in combination with the remarkable trumpet virtuoso Gilbert Castellanos. Together they have developed a sterling rapport.

"Gilbert and I have a connection," says Hollyday. "When we play, we don't need to talk. That's why I named the album *Telepathy*."

One listen to the burning modal opener, "One of Another Kind," by Freddie Hubbard, and that intimate connection is firmly established. Hollyday bursts out of the gates with gleeful squeals and whinnies-- followed closely by Castellanos' tart and taut essay. It's an auspicious beginning.

Hollyday chose Bud Powell's "Hallucination," because "it has the Bud Powell stamp. It's got a kind of built-in arrangement and it's advanced composition--bluesy and pure bebop." Using drummer Tyler Kreutel's crisp ride cymbal beat as a unifying thread, Hollyday soars through the changes and Castellanos picks up exactly where he left off. In a spirited exchange of fours with Kreutel, Hollyday squeezes in a quote from "Billie's Bounce," answered by Castellanos' appropriation of "Moose the Mooch." Unplanned, intuitive, telepathic.

The keen relationship of Kreutel's drums and the powerfully assertive piano mastery of Joshua White come to the fore on Hollyday's very "up" version of "Everything happens to Me," which swings harder than a weather vane in a twister. Hollyday delivers ebullient

smears and Castellanos obtains a delicious sound on the muted horn.

How players deal with a ballad is often the true test of maturity, and Hollyday's bittersweet interpretation of "Autumn in New York," indicates that everyone on this session is the real deal. The tune begins with Joshua White alone, setting everything up. Of White, Hollyday observed, "He helps me with my journey. We're always feeding off each other and he takes me where I need to go in my solos."

Also excellent on this tune is bassist Rob Thorsen, who Hollyday characterized as "Such a positive force. He's the ultimate pro and he makes everybody feel comfortable." Thorsen's warm, woody solo unfolds organically, with purpose. Enough cannot be said about the sound of the leader's horn—he's got a languid, honey-toned vibrato that makes each note stand out.

It all comes together with wicked alacrity on the closer, Charlie Parker's "Segment." Hollyday and Castellanos have been playing this tune for years, and their degree of dialogue and intuition is in a word, telepathic.

The tempo works because the rhythm section is exceptionally strong. Kruetel was chosen for this session based on his close working relationship with White. Like Castellanos and Hollyday, there is a close intuitive connection. "When I think of Tyler, I think of Joshua," says Hollyday. "They play really well together."

There is a palpable joy throughout the music on this disc. You can almost see everyone smiling even as they dig deep and challenge each other. This is how jazz is supposed to sound.

Robert Bush, 2018

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