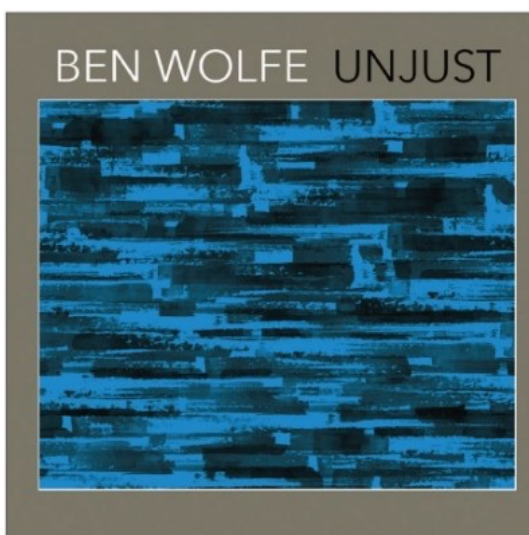


DOWNBEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

SINCE 1934

April 2023



Ben Wolfe

Unjust
RESIDENT ARTS

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The third in a trilogy of albums that bassist-composer Wolfe recorded in 2021 during three two-day blocks in the studio with multiple ensembles, *Unjust* is a brilliant work of melodic ensemble writing and superb playing by a stellar intergenerational crew. Things kick off in high-flying fashion with "The Heckler," an uptempo number that has trumpeter Nicholas Payton and alto saxophonist Immanuel Wilkins taking turns wailing against a frenet-

ic pulse laid down by drummer Aaron Kimmel and the leader. Vibraphonist Joel Ross' minimalist comping creates an ethereal presence in contrast to the runaway bum here. The loping and moody "Hats Off To Rebay" has Ross and Wilkins uniting on a tight, angular head, à la Eric Dolphy's "Out To Lunch," before launching into individual riveting solos.

"Lullaby In D" is a gorgeous, affecting ballad that showcases rising star tenor saxophonist Nicole Glover, who brings a luxurious, breathy quality that belies her young age; more Ben Webster than Michael Brecker. The tasty medium-tempo swinger "Bob French" finds the ensemble in a relaxed groove paced by Wolfe's solidly walking bass lines and inspired soloing from Glover and Payton, who engage in blistering exchanges at the tag. "The Corridor," showcasing Ross' vibes, and a rare solo turn from the bassist-leader. The angular "Mask Man" and Monkish title track, put Payton and Glover on the front line before freewheeling solos, are more proof of this modernist ensemble's unity and urge to swing.

-Bill Milkowski

Unjust: The Heckler; Hats Off To Rebay; Lullaby In D; Bob French; The Corridor; Mask Man; Eventually; Unjust; Sparkling Red; Side-ways; Hats Off To Rebay (Interlude); Reprise (Credits). (58:26)
Personnel: Ben Wolfe, bass; Aaron Kimmel, drums; Nicholas Payton, trumpet (1, 4, 6, 8, 10); Immanuel Wilkins, alto saxophone (1, 2, 9-11); Nicole Glover, tenor saxophone (3, 4, 6, 8); Joel Ross, Vibraphone (1, 2, 5, 7, 9-12); Orrin Evans, piano (3, 4); Addison Frei, piano (1, 7, 9, 12).

Ordering Info: benwolfe.com