

Satoko Fujii's **MA-DO** (japan)

Satoko Fujii – piano

Natsuki Tamura – trumpet

Norikatsu Koreyasu – bass

Akira Horikoshi – drums



Whenever pianist-composer **Satoko Fujii** assembles a new band, it's a sign that she's taking off in a new direction. Her new Japanese quartet **MA-DO** is no exception. Their debut recording, **Heat Wave** (26 August 2008, NotTwo Records) is a stunning display of group sensitivity to tone color, silence, and interaction, as well as finely balanced and nuanced interpretation of composition.

"I really wanted to put together a band to play my original music with a very sensitive approach," Fujii explains. "My other Japanese quartet is rock band that has strong power, but it is sometimes not easy for me to play quietly. The project I have with Dresser and Black has a lot of improvisation parts that I really like, but these days I'm writing more and more, so I wanted to have a project that can work more from written parts."

"Ma-do' means 'window' in Japanese," she continues. "Also, 'ma' means 'the silence between notes. I wanted the name of the band to show how the music opens to the outside (just like window) and that silence has probably more meaning than notes."

The compositions that **Fujii** has written for **MA-DO** do open up a world of new sonic possibilities and encompass a wide range of moods and tempos. The quartet executes difficult unison lines, abrupt changes in direction, and the blending of composition and improvisation with elegant precision. Fujii's arrangements explore different combinations of instruments to create textural and timbral variety, changing the density of the music to accommodate more space and openness as well as a fuller ensemble sound.

In this acoustic setting, the group explores subtle textures and tone colors, using silence and group interaction to build brilliant collages of sound, melody, and rhythm. **Fujii** broadens her sonic pallet, using the inside of the piano and prepared piano to stunning effect throughout the album.

Fujii, who celebrates her 50th birthday in October 2008, has been one of the most original voices in jazz for more than a decade. She is *"a virtuoso piano improviser, an original composer and a band-leader who gets the best collaborators to deliver,"* says John Fordham in [The Guardian](#) (UK). Her innovative synthesis of jazz, contemporary classical, avant-rock and folk music is featured on more than 50 albums as a leader or co-leader. She has led some of the most consistently creative ensembles in modern improvised music, including her trio with bassist Mark Dresser and drummer Jim Black, and an avant-rock quartet featuring Takeharu Hayakawa, Tatsuya Yoshida, and Natsuki Tamura. **Fujii** has also established herself as one of the world's leading composers for large jazz ensembles. In 2006 she simultaneously released four big band albums: one from her New York ensemble, and one each by three different Japanese bands. In addition to playing accordion in her husband trumpeter Natsuki Tamura's Gato Libre quartet, she also performs in several duos, as an unaccompanied soloist, and in ad hoc groupings with musicians working in different genres. Recent collaborators include ROVA saxophone quartet, violinist Carla Kihlstedt, and Dutch pianist Misha Mengelberg.

album: Heat Wave (NotTwo Records, 2008)



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