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CD/LP/Track Review

Lena Bloch: Feathery (2014)

By [HRAYR ATTARIAN](#), Published: March 18, 2014

Saxophonist Lena Bloch's *Feathery* is a cerebral album laced with a mature, tender passion. It is also a collaborative effort with her sidemen contributing to the creative process democratically while maintaining their individuality.

Drummer [Billy Mintz](#)'s thunderous beats and crashing cymbals set an expectant and dramatic mood on Guitarist [Dave Miller](#)'s solemn and ethereal "Rubato." Miller's haunting almost baroque explorations add a mystical touch while bassist [Cameron Brown](#)'s bowed and reverberating strings maintain the western classical sensibility while meandering into freer realms. Bloch's tenor subtly balances an edgy atonality with a deep lyricism.

Eastern esthetics and poetry mark Bloch's own "Farewell to Arms." Her long, melancholic notes cascade darkly over Mintz's booming drums and Brown's deep reverberations. Miller's shimmering strums punctuate Bloch's intricate and introspective soliloquy. Brown's spiritual solo echoes like a prayer against the surrounding silence.

Bloch and Brown intelligently deconstruct Mintz's charming "Beautiful You" down to its melodic essence. Bloch's stimulating and provocative impromptu lines coalesce with those of her sidemen into a refreshingly innovative interpretation of the ballad.

Brown contributes the delightfully twisted lullaby "Baby Suite." His complex adlib phrases open the track and after an intense and elegiac period in the spotlight his bass tines bleed into



fluttering pulsatile duet with Mintz. In front of this backdrop Bloch's agile and angular saxophone launches into a thrilling and multifaceted spontaneous monologue with boppish virtuosity. The piece also features Mintz's rich, harmonic percussion and Miller's slow simmering chords. Brown concludes his tune with a hypnotic nocturnesque aura.

Bloch's unconventional approach also results in a magical retelling of the standard "Star Eyes," retitled here "Starry-Eyed." Her heady, mesmerizing tone undulates in an enchanted and imaginative extemporization that is acutely melodic but spiced with the right amount of mordant dissonance.

With her first release Bloch emerges on to the music scene an accomplished and sophisticated improviser and composer. A superlative debut like this is a portent for a brilliant career and, hopefully, it means Bloch will continue to produce such intriguing and elegant works.

Track Listing: Hi-Lee; Rubato; Baby Suite; Starry-Eyed; Marshmallow; Farewell to Arms; Featherbed; Beautiful You; Hi-Lee (reprise).

Personnel: Lena Bloch: tenor saxophone; Dave Miller: guitar; Cameron Brown: bass; Billy Mintz: drums.

Record Label: Thirteenth Note Records

Style: [Modern Jazz](#)

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