

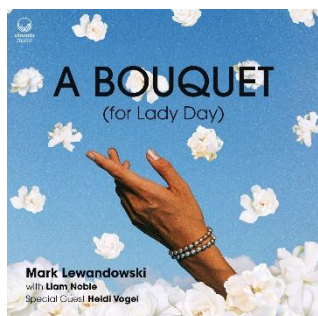
Mark Lewandowski: A Bouquet for Lady Day

Rating: ★★★★★

Author: Eddie Myer

Record and Artist Details

Musicians:	Liam Noble (piano) Mark Lewandowski (double bass) Heidi Vogel (vocals)
Label:	Ubuntu Music
Media Format:	CD
Record Date: June 14, 2023	Rec. September 2022



Tributes to Billie Holliday are not in short supply: the woman christened Eleanora Fagan has become subsumed into an iconic figure in the popular imagination that sometimes reduces this complex and multi-talented artist to a handful of tragic clichés. This project takes a different approach - there's no 'Lover Man', no 'God Bless the Child' and, for all but two tracks, no vocals. Instead, we have a series of duets where Lewandowski and pianist Liam Noble deploy their considerable

depth as musicians to create a set of pieces that aren't pastiches or self-conscious exercises in nostalgia, but rather explorations of Billie's unique musical legacy, especially her relationships with other musicians – pianists Teddy Wilson and Mal Waldron, of course, but also the misunderstood Herbie Nichols and the titan Lester Young. 'Billie's Blues' collapses from straight boogie-woogie into dark hued free playing: 'Who Wants Love' is arranged into some lovely Lester-ish phrasing: 'Some Other Spring' starts with a glittering shower of arco bass and piano tremolos: 'This Year's Kisses' has Lewandowski bringing out the bow again for a dramatic quasi-classical introduction that breaks into hot swing; 'What A Little Moonlight Can Do' explores an impressionistic rubato. Noble is on fine form throughout, his depth, subtlety and range always deployed in the service of the music: Lewandowski impresses with his chops and musicality. The stage is set so that the dramatic entry of Heidi Vogel, singing two of Billie's own compositions with utter conviction, has a real impact, creating a fine climax to this understated gem. Masterly.