



Mark Lewandowski: Waller

Rating: ★★★★★

Author: Stuart Nicholson

Record and Artist Details

Musicians:	Liam Noble (p) Mark Lewandowski (b) Paul Clarvis (d)
Label:	Self-release
Media Format:	CD
Record Date: April 7, 2017	Rec. November 2016

Thomas 'Fats' Waller may have gone (he died in 1943), but after a considerable hiatus he's no longer forgotten. Mark Lewandowski's odyssey into the Waller legacy is no nostalgia trip, but a serious attempt to explore early-20th century jazz from a 21st century perspective. Waller created robust and thematically strong material that largely adhered to the standard 32-bar format and tinkering with its surface can often lead to pastiche. Of necessity then, Lewandowski's trio don't pussyfoot around with the material at hand, using a variety of techniques such as bi-tonality, harmonic substitution, altering tempos, inverting melody lines, reductionism and eliding one Waller tune into another (for example, 'It's a Sin to Tell a Lie' and 'I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter' becomes 'It's a Sin to...Write a Letter') as they deconstruct Waller's songs and reassemble them in their own image. The result is not the musical paella of melodic bits and pieces some may imagine, but a series of performances that achieve their unity and coherence through the collective instincts of three musically curious improvisers. Often, their diligent deconstructions take on a life of their own and collectively contribute to this successful recording debut