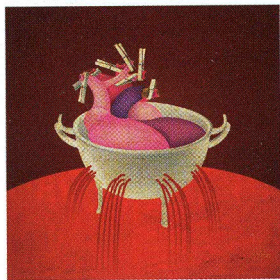


PAOLO FRESU & OMAR SOSA
featuring JAUQUES MORELENBAUM



Alma

Paolo Fresu/Omar Sosa

Alma

OTÁ 1023



Alma would be mood music if it weren't also so playful. The combination of Italian trumpeter/flugelhornist Paolo Fresu and Cuban keyboardist Omar Sosa has resulted in a number of live shows as well as a previous CD, the live *Promise* in 2007. Their collegial chemistry is obvious here.

Part of what keeps the music slightly off-kilter and interesting is their use of effects, selective vocal insertions and the presence (on four cuts) of cellist Jaques Morelenbaum. On the opener, Fresu's medium-tempo, spritely "S'Inguldu," Morelenbaum follows the song's playful melody lines along with his cohorts but then inserts his own sonic contrasts, especially in the midst of what feels like a group

improv. The best music here, however, comes with the more open-sky, mysterious material, where the reverb works to further the mood and feel of a song both tuneful but also atmospheric, Sosa's bluesy "Inverno Grigio." The ache is so subtle, Fresu's open horn mournful without being sentimental, Sosa's piano chords haunting, his slight use of effects and a punctuated single bass line just the right touches. And Sosa's slow, two-chord "Old D Blues," with Fresu's best, most Miles Davis-like mute playing, is a haunter that may linger after all the other music's gone.

The duo's versatility gets the better of them on (relatively) zippier tunes. While it's a marvel of technique, Sosa's fervent "Angustia" distracts with its recurring patterns, a boxed-in feeling predominant. The groove and the extra touches are slinky and alluring on the duo's "No Trance," the medium-tempo pulse, percussive effects and keyboard spices contrasting with Fresu's alternately open and muted horns, which float serenely over the coursing tempo.

That melancholy, that yearning comes to the fore with all three players on "Crepuscolo," the song's form almost a cry for a center as it seems to wander, Morelenbaum's cello aching for a sense of communion in the middle of Fresu's searching open horn and Sosa's gently voiced piano musings.

—John Ephland

Alma: S'Ingulda; Inverno Grigio; No Trance; Angustia; Crepuscolo; Moon On The Sky; Old D Blues; Medley Part I: Ninos; Medley Part II: Nenia; Under African Skies; Rimanere Grandel (60:31)

Personnel: Paolo Fresu, trumpet, flugelhorn, percussion, multi-effects, whistle; Omar Sosa, acoustic piano, Fender Rhodes, microKorg, samplers, multi-effects, percussion, vocals; Jaques Morelenbaum, cello (1, 4, 6, 11).

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