

MARTIN WIND
Stars (Newvelle Records)

The eerie outside world may stay outside when playing the album *Stars*. “The world news is already a daily torment; for once, let’s bring nothing but beauty into the living room,” Martin Wind must have thought. And yet current events still play a role, in the sense that the musicians deliberately distance themselves from them. Fighters for freedom may find a moment of distraction with this album, late in the evening.

The leader and bassist took two days to record the pieces and to integrate a special guest soloist: pianist Kenny Barron (82). Wind had already built a history with clarinetist Anat Cohen and drummer Matt Wilson. Barron not only read his parts effortlessly from the page, but immediately understood what was expected of him: extremely subtle interplay in a highly diverse repertoire, sometimes without rhythmic support or even a defined tempo. The pianist must have been so impressed and motivated that his notes fell perfectly into place right away.

The interplay on this album is more important than individual virtuosity. The drummer seems to almost efface himself, and Cohen shows a preference for the middle register. Not everyone needs to solo on each track; for every piece, the musicians agreed on one or two soloists. The pieces are mostly played at medium or slow tempos. “Stars Fell on Alabama” receives an old-fashioned, danceable ballad pulse, at roughly a metronome marking of seventy.

Wind brings to mind John Clayton: another classically trained bassist with a preference for the unamplified instrument and an aversion to unnecessary fuss. Pay attention to his bowed passages in the melancholic bossa nova “Pra Dizer Adeus,” translated as “To Say Goodbye.”

He selected a refined repertoire that, alongside standards, includes original compositions that blend seamlessly with them. One’s thoughts turn to the combos surrounding clarinetists Herman Schoonderwalt (the album *The Winner*), Barry Block (see my book *Jazz in the Shadows*), and above all Michael Moore. There are worse musicians to be compared with, to put it mildly.

Text: Jeroen de Valk

