

NATURAL DIVERSION ALBUM REVIEW (LAURA KENNEDY, WGLT RADIO 89.1FM RADIO)

It's been a bit of a wait for the new release from Travis Wesley – several years, in fact. But the wily jazz man makes it worth the wait with his latest effort.

Pianist Wesley has teamed with bassist Matt Hughes and drummer Tom Marko and the trio mesh seamlessly. Straight out of the shoot the trio dazzles on an original by Wesley, "Natural Diversion." Putting this tune in the number one position demands your attention, telling the listener that Wesley has confidence in his composing chops. And well he should, because "Natural Diversion" is impressive. The song has a marvelous sense of forward motion that's exhilarating. It brims with sharp optimism. This is strong, imaginative work.

"Teach Me Tonight" offers simple lines that build a respectful and thoughtful interpretation. The romantic lyricism of Lerner & Loews "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face" is fully evident in this performance.

Halting lines emphasize a breathless realization of real emotion. You can just hear Henry Higgins finally figuring it all out! The bowing by bassist Hughes brings a wry wistfulness to this lovely performance.

Familiar songs take on new hues in the hands of musicians who have something to say, and the trio has much to offer on "Emily." The song begins in a spare, haunting mode, then flirtatiously swings up the pace. There's tight interplay between Wesley, Hughes and Marko.

The sophisticated swing on "My Shining Hour" is expansive and absorbing – and it doesn't hurt that the guys sound like they're having a great time playing! There's an exciting solo from Marko that really showcases the drummers' sterling chops.

"Slip Slidin' Away" is powered by some savvy swing, as well as a feeling of regret just under the surface. The Paul Simon tune is well handled, indeed.

"What Are You Doing for the Rest of Your Life" is a black tie affair to remember. When I was a kid, this is the kind of music I used to imagine

grownups listened to at swanky cocktail parties. So nice to know music like this really does exist outside of my imagination!

The CD winds up with the traditional tune “Billy Boy,” and it’s quite a jaunty ride. It’s charmingly audacious and proves these cats can swing with verve!

The production values on this CD are first rate. Recorded at Pogo Studios in Champaign by Mark Rubel, this is a companionable disc that is ultimately irresistible. Keep it close at hand!