

CD Review

"Three Pianos for Jimi"
Geri Allen with the Batson Brothers

Few projects could be as conceptually hip as an avant-garde trio of pianos covering lesser-known Hendrix compositions, but our world is Godless enough to allow such things to come into being, and twisted enough that this, the resulting album, is actually quite good. Much is made in the accompanying notes about Hendrix's undervalued talents as a composer, unnecessarily, as the real issue is the aptness of the approach taken by Allen and her two young protégés. (I, for one, never doubted that Jimi could write a good tune.) Although the music is occasionally stunted by repetitive rock chord sequences, the melodic grandeur of the originals provides an interesting starting point for these intricate arrangements and improvisations, with many of the pieces being distorted beyond recognition. It is only when a familiar melodic line catches the ear, casting an eerie déjà vu over the music, that Hendrix really features as a creative force. Aside from which, the three pianists acquit themselves impressively, with richly textured and distinctive pieces that will stand alone even to those who wouldn't know their Hendrix from the Who.