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Daniel Yviniac and John Hollenbeck, "Shut Up and Dance" performed by the Orchestre National de Jazz

[Bee Jazz, two discs]

4 stars

Orchestra National de Jazz "Around Robert Wyatt" conducted by Daniel Yviniac, arranged by Vincent Artaud

[Bee Jazz, two discs]

3 and 1/2 stars

Ecclesiastes was wrong. There is something new under the sun. To wit, a gorgeous new kind of orchestral jazz from Europe that takes the art of jazz orchestration and composition way beyond what is commonly heard from American jazz orchestras. It would, frankly, be impossible without the kind of economic support that the great European jazz orchestras get from governments, radio, etc. But the result here on "Shut Up and Dance" is that one of the greatest living jazz composers John Hollenbeck of the Claudia Quintet (listen to "Eternal Interlude" by Hollenbeck's Large Ensemble from 2009) has produced one of the greatest jazz discs of 2011 by large measure. If the title leads you to expect some sort of pop dance music, forget it. This is music that, as its publicity says, includes "a ping pong ball bounding across piano wire, miscellaneous objects mistreated by computer software, instrument keys, hands rubbing, PVC tubes morphing into melodies." It is unmistakably jazz but is fully cognizant with the most advanced music of both the classical and pop worlds, and all played at the highest level by Yviniac's French orchestra. "Around Robert Wyatt" is a distinctly lesser effort built on the music of the legendary European omni-fusion fantasia band, Soft Machine. It is "Shut Up and Dance," though that fully convinces you that Hollenbeck is a jazz composer who has taken the next step in jazz after the first successive steps in jazz orchestration beyond Duke Ellington were taken by Gil Evans and Maria Schneider. *(Jeff Simon)*

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