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ZBT: Out of This Town (2012)

By [KARL ACKERMANN](#), Published: July 25, 2012

There are many fine selling points for the city of Tampa, but being a "jazz Mecca" probably isn't at the top of the list. With its aspirational title, *Out of This Town* may be the vehicle that takes the Zach Bartholomew Trio (ZBT) from their native Florida to some greater exposure. The group's debut recording is an exercise in democratic creativity with its namesake leader, bassist Brandon Robertson and drummer Miles Bozeman each contributing original compositions.



Like many burgeoning piano trios of late, ZBT has one foot planted firmly in the established post bop idiom and another in far less familiar territory. A case in point is "Lazy Bird." Bartholomew introduces the piece as a ballad before Bozeman joins with an improvisation that seems to intentionally clash with the original narrative. At first, it is a bit disconcerting but that proves an effective motivation to listen carefully. What more vigilant attention reveals is that the deviation itself becomes compelling. The players neither attempt to stylistically reconcile or dominate and what emerges is a grudgingly accepted treaty.

A subcutaneous tension propels much of the material in this program. On mid-tempo pieces such as "Stop and Go," "Road Trip" and the title track, conventional structures are augmented with Bartholomew's very personalized use of more elaborate rhythms and melodic patterns. "Lover's Lament" is the best example of the group's agility in shifting tempos and themes seamlessly. The melancholy opening is in a classical vein but changes character almost imperceptibly, guided by Bozeman's brushes. Robertson utilizes bowed and pizzicato bass in the lower register to propel the tempo. It's a fine showcase for the trio's individual talents as well as their synergy.

Out of This Town is a promising first effort from this young group of musicians. The interplay between them reflects both empathy and individuality. ZBT demonstrates a refined appreciation of harmonic architecture and a nuanced expression of improvisation. The compositions combine good melodic hooks with erratic timing in an effective angular treatment of the tunes. The pieces don't jump off the disc, as much as they inspire deliberation.

Track Listing: Stop and Go; Out of This Town; Shades of Blue; Lover's Lament; New Beginnings; Road Trip; Lazy Bird; Forever More; Another Shade of Blue.

Personnel: Zach Bartholomew: piano; Brandon Robertson: bass; Miles Bozeman: drums.

Record Label: Self Produced | Style: [Straight-ahead/Mainstream](#)

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