



## Martti Vesala Soundpost Quintet

### Landmarks



### New Nordic Directions

The first three seconds of "Trial by Fire" are an exact replica of the opening chord of the title track to Miles Davis's iconic *Bitches Brew*. It is a statement of intent, a declaration of wanting to go beyond: *"I really intended for the music to sound more Nordic, to give it a sense of calm, longing and space,"* Vesala recalls. *"Over the past years, my compositions have become more rich and colorful, as I'm drawing inspiration from more varied sources."* The results speak for themselves: *Landmarks* is easily Martti Vesala's biggest vision so far.

These inspirations, have sunk in, and turned into vital undercurrents – undercurrents which are more unpredictable, even violent on occasion. Which matches the emotional oscillations of *Landmarks*, always written from an autobiographical perspective during a period of big personal turmoil, of breakups and new found love. Talking Miles again – it's not a single, sustained mood like *Kind of Blue*. It's a rollercoaster ride entirely his own.

"Wild Eyes" (inspired by his love for cats), with its sharp, almost electronic-sounding drums, maps out new territory and briefly aligns the quintet with some of the currents radiating out from the British jazz scene (*"I do like what Matthew Halsall is doing a lot"*, Vesala says). But already on the subsequent "Nightflight Home", a deep, slow-simmering ballad about the fear and elation that change can bring, his Finnish roots come to the fore without ever tapping into worn-out folk clichés.

Everyone in the band has grown, starting with Vesala himself. On "Closer to the surface", his ecstatic solo demonstrates his interest in non-trumpet greats like John Coltrane as part of his never ending quest for expanding his technique, and palette. The progression of Soundpost Quintet as a unit is becoming apparent, too, with the performers gelling tighter than ever while simultaneously excelling as individual instrumentalists. This is still an all-acoustic band – but with both eyes closed, it is hard to tell at times.

There is a telling episode from the time Vesala was searching for a name for the band: *"One of the key pieces of our sound is the acoustic double bass. Inside the body of the instrument, there is a small piece called sound post, which helps to even out the vibration. Inspiringly, this very sound post is sometimes referred to as the âme - the soul."*

It may only be a tiny technical detail to an outsider. To the musicians on *Landmarks*, however, it details like this that are the breath of life infusing and informing every single bar of music.