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Bio information: **PIXEL**

Title: **REMINDER** (Cuneiform Rune 342)

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FILE UNDER: JAZZ / POP / ROCK

Pixel, the powerhouse indie-jazz ensemble from Norway, makes an indelible first impression with *Reminder*, an audaciously creative debut album on **Cuneiform**. Led by the remarkable 25-year-old bassist/vocalist **Ellen Andrea Wang**, the protean quartet is the most alluring band yet to explode out of Norway's burgeoning improvised music scene. Combining indie rock energy with the improvisational flexibility of a post-bop combo, Pixel breaks down familiar musical elements and recombines them in a succession of startlingly original soundscapes. Earthy and ethereal, wistful and aggressive, sensuous and pummeling, the band refuses to settle into one mood or sonic space for long.

With saxophonist **Harald Lassen**, 24, trumpeter **Jonas Kilmork Vemøy**, 25, and drummer **Jon Audun Baar**, 25, Pixel features the same piano-less instrumentation as the epochal jazz quartets led by **Gerry Mulligan** and **Ornette Coleman**. Like their jazz antecedents, the band takes full advantage of the harmonic freedom afforded by the lack of a chordal instrument, but Pixel is more interested in painting dramatic, emotionally charged scenes than in setting up extended solos. With sharply etched compositions, Pixel has attained preternatural cohesion after two years together, moving seamlessly from composed passages to group improvisation marked by conversational interplay. A radical democracy, no one instrument stays in the foreground for long.

From the haunting first tune, it's clear that Pixel possesses the insight and technical prowess to attain their considerable musical ambitions. The album opens with "Prelude," a ravishing tune that marries Wang's deliberate bass line to her gently lilting wordless vocals, a felicitous marriage of earth and sky. Lassen introduces "Home" with a sinuous line that accelerates into a churning anthem.

Just when you think you have the band pegged as a melodic-minded instrumental combo with a yen for rock beats, Wang unleashes her fearsome side on "Call Me." Her voice straining with passion, she's a desperate avenger, needy, enraged and skidding out of control. It's a fully committed performance by an artist who isn't afraid to let her hair down.

Vemøy plays gleaming long tones on "She Knows," as the rhythm section churns gently underneath in double time, building tension that only releases with the artful segue into "Wake Up." If "Call Me" is a relentless nightmare, Wang displays an entirely different persona on the beatific "Wake Up," sublime song she delivers with a crystalline tone (like all the songs on *Reminder* the lyrics are in English).

With every track but one clocking it well under five minutes, Pixel makes every note count, never wasting a moment or letting a tune wear out its welcome. When the band finally stretches out on the eight-minute "Hvor Ble Den Av?" Vemøy takes his time unfurling the stately theme until Wang moves to the foreground with a dexterous wordless vocal in counterpoint to her thumping bass. With the band providing richly textured backing vocals, she takes on yet another guise with "I Hang," sounding like a rock chanteuse on a mission. The album closes with "An Apple in the Country Hill," an eerie, atmospheric excursion that introduces yet another facet to the capaciously inventive quartet.

All four Pixels are ubiquitous on the fiercely creative Scandinavian jazz scene, which has embraced the quartet as an exemplar of Norway's populist cutting edge. Slated for a series of major festivals and showcases across the region and the UK in conjunction with the release of *Reminder*, Pixel is poised to take the jazz world by storm.

Wang hails from a musical family. She spent years studying violin and piano before she picked up the double bass at the age of 17 and quickly made it her own. A graduate of Oslo's Norwegian Academy of Music, she gained widespread attention in Norway with the release of 2010's *Norwegian Song 3*, when she was pegged as a rising bass star who held her own in the company of established masters like pianist **Dag Arnesen**, drummer **Pål Thowsen** and trumpeter **Palle Mikkelborg**.

When she's not working with Pixel, Wang can be heard accompanying pop singer **Thea Hjelmeland** or anchoring the progressive rock bands **Synkoke** and **White Willow**. She's already contributed to nearly a dozen albums with various artists. Last year, she earned several coveted awards, including the prestigious **Jazztalent Dølajaz**.

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Before he took up the saxophone at 13, Lassen studied the piano and sang gospel in his church. A respected bandleader in his own right since 2008, he's collaborated with heavyweights like **Andrew D'Angelo** and **Ralph Alessi**. But Lassen has recently cemented his status as an essential new voice through his work with his band **Play Tell**, which features internationally renowned bassist **Mats Eilertsen** and legendary drummer **Jon Christensen**, who powered **Keith Jarrett's** great 1970s European quartet.

A conservatory-trained musician, Vemøy graduated from the Norwegian Academy of Music in 2011. One of the most expressive trumpeters on the scene, he's been sought out by a wide array of acts, including singer/songwriter **Kristin Minde**, prog rock band **Blokk 5**, the Balkan brass-inflected **The Captain and Me**, and the pop/rock band **Lama**, created by former **Jaga Jazzist** keyboardist **Nils Martin Larsen**.

Like Vemøy, Baar is a conservatory-trained musician who studied at the Norwegian Academy of Music with teachers like Jon Christensen and **Rune Martinsen**. A prolific sideman, he's performed at major festivals with numerous bands and artists over the past four years. Outside of Pixel, Baar has been most visible in an acclaimed trio with the well-traveled guitar master **Jon Ebersson**, a pillar of the Scandinavian jazz scene since the early 1970s.

Far more than the sum of its parts, Pixel allows each of these gifted musicians to fully explore their vivid individual voices by interacting as equals with formidable interlocutors. With any luck, **Reminder** is just the first dispatch from a band that seems destined and ready for greatness.

For more information, see:

www.pixelband.no - www.facebook.com/pixelnorway

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