

Signal to Noise (Winter 2005)

The freewheeling Berkeley scene of the 1980s had no better symbol than Peter Apfelbaum's Hieroglyphics Ensemble. Jessica Jones and her husband Tony were both in that band, and they bring something of the Hieros' throw-it-in-the-pot spirit to Nod. This record is a family affair with both Joneses on tenor, Jessica doubling piano and daughter Candace along for a fey "These Foolish Things." To this and the core rhythm section of Ken Filiano and Charlie Hunter drummer Derrek Phillips, the Joneses add Joseph Jarman, who brings some of his sunny, Buddhist-inspired songs and a burbling bass clarinet, French hornist Mark Taylor, and fellow ex-Berkeley oddball Connie Crothers on piano. The material is mostly excellent and always idiosyncratic. Crothers' Tristano influence adds an intriguing angle to the boppish and irresistible "Bird's Word," and Phillips puts his quasi-second-liney hip swing into a two-tenor arrangement of Jacki McLean's "Little Melonae." Phillips has a little too much on his hands to make much of the rap on the CD's final cut and the French poem recited over "Love and Persevere" went right over my tete, but that's okay. Nod has plenty else to hold your attention. – John Chacona