SJB SELECTION

REVIEW · JAZZ

Nemesis | Aaron Parks

Perhaps Aaron Parks' true nemesis is the label we keep trying to stick on his music: just when we think we have found the right one, the music has already climbed over the wall.

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Perhaps the best way to understand "Nemesis" is to stop asking what genre it belongs to. Jazz, rock, ambient? Aaron Parks knows the rules perfectly well and seems to enjoy himself most when he starts making them disappear.

Aaron Parks followed an unusually precocious musical path: college at fourteen, New York at sixteen, Terence Blanchard's band at eighteen. Instead of locking him inside jazz, that accelerated education seems to have given him the tools to keep climbing over its fences.

"Nemesis," from *Invisible Cinema*, is a perfect example.

Alongside the piano are Mike Moreno on guitar, Matt Penman on bass and Eric Harland on drums. Parks adds Mellotron, glockenspiel and keyboards. Jazz walks in through the front door, rock slips through the window, while ambient textures seem to seep slowly through the walls.

Yet nothing sounds assembled.

Rhythmic precision coexists with improvisation. Structures return, bend and change colour, held together by a subtle **rhythmic ticking** that suggests precision without ever becoming completely mechanical. Piano and guitar move together, separate, then brush against each other again, leaving behind **a sound with metallic edges**.

The track moves like a mechanism built with extreme precision that somehow keeps finding unpredictable ways to change direction.

That is where its **unpredictable precision** emerges: everything feels engineered down to the millimetre, yet something keeps slipping sideways, swerving out of line, breathing outside the grid.

There is no definitive explanation of the “Nemesis” in the title. Perhaps that is for the best. The antagonist may simply be our need to stick a label on the music.

Jazz? Rock? Cinematic music?

After a while, who cares?

Invisible Cinema offers a more interesting perspective: Aaron Parks seems to be composing the soundtrack to a film that has not yet been shot. There is motion, tension, shadow and sudden space, but no compulsory image.

Parks has described finding one’s own voice less as an act of construction than as creating the conditions in which something can grow.

More gardening than engineering.

And “Nemesis” grows exactly like that: free, crooked in just the right way, difficult to fence in.

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LISTEN

Nemesis — Aaron Parks — is in our playlist Midnight Piano & Blue Notes.

Aaron Parks · *Invisible Cinema* (Blue Note, 2008). Updated every Friday. Selected by ear.

LISTEN FIRST. SELECT SECOND.