SJB SELECTION

REVIEW · JAZZ

Uneasy | Vijay Iyer Trio

That is what makes “Uneasy” so powerful: Vijay Iyer does not try to cure unease. He turns it into a place where three musicians can still meet.

SJB SELECTION · NOVEMBER 2026

Sometimes a word chooses exactly the right moment to become prophetic. “Uneasy” was recorded at the end of 2019, when nobody could have known how soon that title would begin to describe the world.

Vijay Iyer entered the studio with Linda May Han Oh on bass and Tyshawn Sorey on drums. They had known each other musically for years, but this was the first recording devoted specifically to this trio. The project did not begin with a thesis. Music came first: three distinct personalities in the same room, forced not only to play, but to truly listen.

The title reached further back, to a 2011 collaboration between Vijay Iyer and choreographer Karole Armitage. But the idea of unease, anxiety and instability would eventually run beneath the entire album like a cold current.

And that instability is precisely what makes the trio so compelling.

The piano does not rule, it provokes. The bass does not merely support, it replies. The drums grab hold of time, stretch it, loosen it, occasionally almost crumple it through subtle **touches and rebounds**. The music takes on a **cold temperature**, while piano and bass continually renegotiate the balance.

Nobody truly owns the centre because the centre shifts the moment someone tries to grab it.

The trio moves like three people crossing unstable ground together: each listens for the others’ footsteps before deciding where to place the next one.

It is fragile yet remarkably lucid, a kind of **restless order** in which everything seems capable of breaking apart, and precisely because of that, everything somehow stays together.

The unease does not remain locked inside the music. Elsewhere on the album are compositions connected to social and political questions, including the Flint water crisis and Black Lives Matter. Discomfort becomes personal and collective, private and political.

But the music offers no cure.

It does not search for peace. It does not search for a conclusion. It does not politely put everything back where it belongs.

It prefers to stay inside the crack.

And from that crack, it keeps moving.

> ***That is what makes "Uneasy" so powerful: Vijay Iyer does not try to cure unease. He turns it into a place where three musicians can still meet.***

LISTEN

Uneasy — Vijay Iyer Trio — is in our playlist Midnight Piano & Blue Notes.

Vijay Iyer, Linda May Han Oh, Tyshawn Sorey · *Uneasy* (ECM, 2021). Updated every Friday. Selected by ear.

LISTEN FIRST. SELECT SECOND.