

Elan Mehler

★★★★★

The After Suite Brownswood

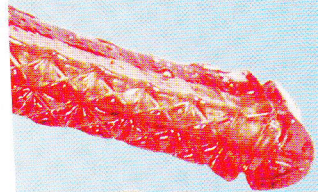
This brooding Brooklynite pianist made his sparsely beautiful debut last year with 'Scheme for Thought' (also for Gilles Peterson's Brownswood imprint). Featuring a drum-free quartet of piano, Fender Rhodes, sax and bass it was packed with softly interlocking melodies that melted together like smoke rings at a particularly heavy session. The antithesis of the *sturm und drang* of much of today's angry post-jazz, Mehler's agenda was one of meditative contemplation at the state we're in, not a guttural rage against the machine. Thus his noirish follow up 'The After Suite' was part inspired by what he describes as a 'life-changing

break-up'. Both drums and vocals are invited in to the mix, pricking the stoner fog of Mehler's debut.

Vocalist Becca Stevens evokes the unsettled mood from the off. 'The Factory' is a paranoid ode to creeping suspicion, before tenorist Jeremy Viner's warm sax opens up on a fuzzy Dexter Gordon-ish solo. Mehler may be exploring darker territory here, but his pristine playing has a Brubeck-style crispness. In places, it's positively rhapsodic, such as on exquisite solo piece 'The Bird' and Hebrew hymn 'He Nay Ma Tov'. The album's zenith is reached on two songs featuring singer Adam McBride-Smith, who evokes the spirit of primetime James Taylor and every jazzier's favourite folkie Nick Drake. *Mike Flynn*

London

Time Out



GET INSPIRED BY YOUR CITY!
TIMEOUT.COM/LONDON
MARCH 26 - APRIL 1 2009