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An innovative drummer cast in Roy Haynes' ultracreative, ever-swinging mold is Ari Hoenig (a regular with Kenny Werner and Jean-Michel Pilc's trios and Joshua Redman's Elastic Band). On his debut as a leader, *The Painter* (Smalls), Hoenig introduces his quartet with Pilc on piano, Matt Penman on bass and Jacques Schwarz-Bart on tenor sax at a live gig at the Fat Cat in New York City.

A remarkable player with an uncommon penchant for melodicism on the kit, Hoenig has already put out two amazing solo drum recordings in which he plays the heads to familiar jazz standards by playing strictly skins, shells and cymbals with nothing more than sticks, brushes, mallets, hands and elbows. The Philadelphia-born, New York-based drummer swings fervently with brushes before switching to sticks and unleashing behind Pilc's pyrotechnic keyboard work on the blazing opener, a stunning trio rendition of Monk's "I Mean You" (catch his melodic quoting of the head at the tag).

The title track is Hoenig's lovely waltz-time ballad. Starting off with brushes, he plays it gracefully while still bristling with swinging momentum, eventually switching to sticks behind Schwarz-Bart's urgent tenor solo and finally erupting on a solo of his own at the tag. Hoenig displays some ultrasensitive brushwork on his bittersweet ballad "For Tracy" and also "Pilc-ing Around," a kind of dissonant mediation on "Naima." He then demonstrates some ultrahip metric modulation on the time-shifting burner "Condemnation" and also on his "Birdless," which also serves as a swinging showcase for both Schwarz-Bart's bravura tenor work and Pilc's mercurial touch. And he closes out the live set with a 16-minute version of "Summertime," in which he pulls from his full bag of melodic drumming tricks. This track alone-full of allusions to "Giant Steps" and underscored by all manner of dramatic extrapolation and virtuosic metric modulation-should be hip enough to make other drummers sit up and take note.

-BILL MILKOWSKI