

## Herb Pomeroy Trio

*Aluminum Baby*

HP3 RECORDS 101

★★★★

## John McNeil

*This Way Out* ▶

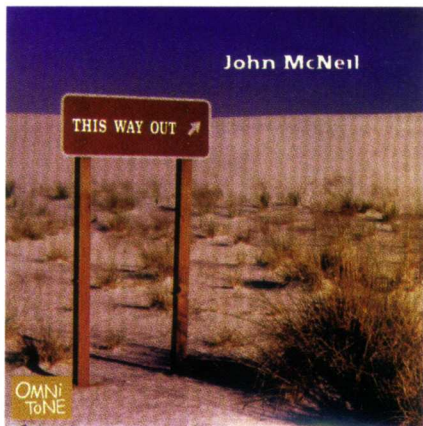
OMNITONE 15204

★★★★

On these two releases, trumpeters Herb Pomeroy and John McNeil—sharing palpable wit, gentility of expression, glancing tone and long roots in Boston education—exhibit abiding vision and fresh outlooks in atypical combos. Both Pomeroy and McNeil choose exquisite melodies, frame them with simplicity and care, and shape them with disarming skill and gentleness.

Pomeroy's trio showcases the former Berklee professor's avuncular ruminations, bitersweet tone and half-valved asides. The three fondle a choker of rare pearls: Jaki Byard's title ballad, Bill Mays' elegant "Play Song," spooky-blue "But Not For Me," and Jimmy Mundy and Oscar Pettiford gems. They take their sweet time, too: Bassist David Landoni ruminatively sets up the brisk Harold Arlen classic, which is tartly plunger-muted by Pomeroy. Multithreat guitarist Anthony Weller contributes sly post-Django Reinhardt lines and wry tunes "Kyrenia," a layered waltz, and "Banana Boat," a blithe calypso featuring Pomeroy zinging on Harmon mute.

A veteran of bands (Horace Silver, Gerry Mulligan, Slide Hampton, Thad Jones and Mel Lewis) and classrooms (New England Conservatory), McNeil explores Spanish connections in a Barcelona date with mellow,



quirky Basque saxophonist Gorka Benitez, Italian bassist Giulia Valle and ex-pat drummer Joe Smith. The heady set mixes haunting tunes (wave-tossed tango, hazy azure reggae taxi ride), luxuriating melodies with cautionary titles ("What Comes After," "Know Your Limits"), free-form miniatures, and brisk smokers ("Last Minute," "Skeeter"). Be it 5/4 flamenco or wistful waltz, the four hew to crafty interplay, rhythmic nudge and tidy solo.

—Fred Bouchard

**Aluminum Baby:** Queer Street; Play Song; Come Rain Or Come Shine; Kyrenia; Banana Boat; Aluminum Baby; But Not For Me; Emily; Laverne Walk. (55:58).

**Personnel:** Herb Pomeroy, trumpet; Anthony Weller, guitar; David Landoni, bass.

**Ordering Info:** anthwell@aol.com

**This Way Out:** Mi Tio; A La Orilla; Picasso View; My Taxi; Last Minute; What Comes After; Because Of You; Know Your Limits; Skeeter; West Coast Memories; Dewey Defeats Truman; Flor De Viento. (54:53)

**Personnel:** John McNeil, trumpet; Gorka Benitez, tenor saxophone; Giulia Valle, bass; Joe Smith, drums.

**Ordering Info:** www.omnitone.com