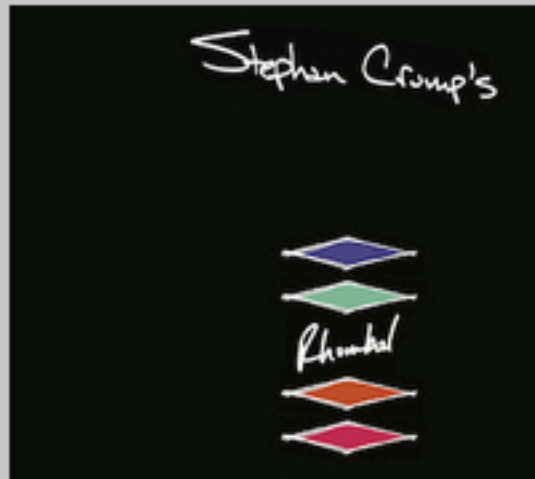


Stephan Crump

**Rhombal**

Papillon Sounds PS51516



Although best known for his work with drummer Marcus Gilmore in pianist Vijay Iyer's high-profile trio, bassist Stephan Crump also leads his own unique groups, including the Rosetta Trio, with guitarists Liberty Ellman and Jaime Fox, as well as Secret Keeper, a duo with guitarist Mary Halvorson. The self-titled debut of Rhombal, Crump's quartet with rising trumpeter Adam O'Farrill, esteemed tenor saxophonist Ellery Eskelin, and powerhouse drummer Tyshawn Sorey, is a very different affair however. Where Crump's string-based projects tend toward the pastoral and rustic, this piano-less quartet lineup leans toward old school urban swing.

Dedicated to his late brother's battle with aggressive sarcoma, *Rhombal* is not a eulogy as much as it is a commemoration of a death well-confronted. Diverse in mood, but cohesive in approach, Crump's plangent motifs reinforce this paradigm, providing thematic direction for the group members' creative extrapolations. No matter the style explored, the leader's assured phrasing resonates in tandem with Sorey's virtuosic technique, whether playing tender ballads, soulful blues or blazing hard bop. Despite their disparate experiences, O'Farrill and Eskelin engage in astute exchanges teeming with inventive lyricism, investing Crump's harmonious melodies with a resolute emotional core.

Crump has stated that Rhombal allows him the opportunity to explore the "creative freedom and challenge that comes from omitting a chordal instrument, and at times to find how the band, itself, might be that instrument." Together as one, the quartet achieves that goal, executing multifaceted arrangements in a manner that yields a sound greater than the sum of its parts.

-Troy Collins