

## TORD GUSTAVSEN QUARTET

### EXTENDED CIRCLE (ECM)

Norwegian pianist-composer Tord Gustavsen creates music like nothing else in jazz today, and his new quartet recording, *Extended*



*Circle*, is a vivid illustration of the singularity of his take on the form. Throughout the album's 12 tracks, eight of which are original compositions by the pianist, the pace is customarily languid; solos and anything as crowd-pleasing as swing are

virtually nonexistent. The result, while sometimes difficult to classify as jazz, is undeniably compelling.

Gustavsen's playing is an intriguing blend of fire and ice, masterfully orchestrating melodic and harmonic silences for maximum impact. His compositions draw interesting inspiration from various forms of sacred music. "The Gift" and "The Embrace" feature melodic concepts redolent of American gospel, and on two linked pieces credited to the quartet, "Entrance" and "Entrance, var.," Tore Brunborg's tenor saxophone takes an ancient incantatory tone while bassist Mats Eilertsen's eerie rumblings seem designed to awaken deities of a far different sort.

Within Gustavsen's conversation-among-equals arrangements, each musician nevertheless manages to make distinctive marks. Brunborg's wistful horn gives "Staying There" an arresting emotional tug, and in the brief solo "Bass Transition," Eilertsen's raga-like lines are enriched by his audible breathing (a result of Manfred Eicher's typically immaculate production). Drummer Jarle Vespestad makes this atmospheric music rhythmically involving as well, injecting a shuffling touch into "Glow" and gracing Gustavsen's take on the Norwegian hymn "Eg Veit I Himmerik Ei Borg" with a tight, driving tension. Those looking for toe-tappin' tunes will not find much of what they seek in *Extended Circle*, but for anyone willing to brave its crags and valleys, Gustavsen's music yields rich rewards. **MATT R. LOHR**

