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THE PLAYMAKER Mads Tolling (Madsman Records)

Young Mads Tolling is definitely one Mad Cat when it comes to jazz violin, a performer capable of engaging strings in a blistering fury on par with the great Jean-Luc Ponty.

The two-time Grammy winner from Denmark was discovered at the Berklee College of Music shortly after moving to Boston. He wows listeners with his finesse and dexterity on this disc, his sophomore CD release and one in which he's backed by jazz greats Russell Ferrante on keyboards, Stanley Clarke on bass, and Stefon Harris on vibes.

His solos are awe-inspiring, whether he's ripping through a melody or, more likely, doing some frenzied improvisation.

His mind and creative juices are constantly on the go, although there are clearly some spots in which Tolling has gone over the top and would have benefited from tighter editing or direction.

Still, Tolling and those who surround him give the listener a valuable commodity, and that's smart, innovative jazz. The disc is largely fresh, original material but includes cool covers of Radiohead's "Just," Thelonious Monk's "Blue Monk," and Led Zeppelin's "Black Dog." As improbable as having Zeppelin performed to jazz violin may sound, Tolling pulls it off.

Another treat is a tribute to Weather Report's late, great bassist Jaco Pastorius, especially hearing Clarke doing Pastorius in the background and being augmented by Tolling's melody in the foreground.

- TOM HENRY