

**Uwe Oberg**

After All  
KONNEX CD

Recorded in Cologne's Loft in December 2005, *After All* is the long-awaited (at least where I live) sequel to 1996's fine Leo Lab outing *Lo*, and once more finds pianist Uwe Oberg in the company of bassist Georg Wolf, drummer Jörg Fischer and, three of the eight tracks, clarinettist extraordinaire Frank Gratkowski.

Like his fellow German free improvising pianist and occasional Gratkowski sparring partner Georg Graewe, Oberg's influences run far and wide, but the traces that remain – the bittersweet harmony of Paul Bley and Ran Blake, the motivic intricacy of Cecil Taylor and Andrew Hill (a fine solo piano to whom can be streamed from Oberg's website, by the way) – have been carefully assimilated into a fluid, often florid style all his own.

He's got the ideal rhythm section to support him too, Fischer's drumming is sensitive and pointillistic without being flashy, and Wolf provides solid harmonic grounding with a full, round tone and a melodic thrust that's dynamic and determined but never brash and aggressive. Gratkowski sitting in is the icing on the cake – Oberg is in his element with another instrument in the mid- and high registers to bounce his musical ideas off, and does so at lightning speed. "Al Dente" is as crisp and tasty as its title implies. But the more introspective trio ballad that precedes it, "Loose All", is no less impressive, as Oberg, Wolf and Fischer tease and fold lines and shapes gently around each other with grace and space to spare. This is supple, intricate, accomplished European contemporary jazz of the highest order.

**DAN WARBURTON**