

The Bad Plus *For All I Care*

The Bad Plus first appeared in 2000, and they didn't go unnoticed for long.

Delighting in challenging conventions and causing jaws to drop, their music quickly won friends among fans and critics. Said *The New Yorker*, "The Bad Plus are the Coen brothers of jazz: both ironic and dead earnest; technically brilliant, beyond versatile, a little chilly sometimes, but funny, surprising, and hard to pin down."

After the success of last year's release, *Prog*, described by *Billboard* as "Easily the most likeable and listenable jazz album of 2007," the trio, never content to stand still, moved on their next challenge with *For All I Care* (Universal/Emarcy), their first album with vocals.

Says bassist Reid Anderson: "The Bad Plus has always reworked contemporary songs; the next logical step was do so with the added clarity of a voice." *For All I Care* was engineered by Brent Sigmeth and mixed by returning partner-in-crime, Tchad Blake (Elvis Costello, Peter Dinklage, Dandy Warhols, Sheryl Crow), who also co-produced the PLUS's first three albums.

Since their formation, The Bad Plus – Ethan Iverson on piano, Anderson on bass and Dave King on drums – have worked on creating a specific group identity.

Classic rock and pop songs by the likes of the Pixies, Bowie, Black Sabbath and Nirvana were *BadPlusified* into convincing jazz vehicles along with their own compelling originals. It was going to take a very special singer who could fit into

the band's style without disrupting the group's internal balance. Their choice was characteristically left of field. The band's first choice was Wendy Lewis, a veteran of the Minneapolis indie-rock scene. "Wendy is like another instrument with intense, compressed energy," says King.

Through a remarkable piece of musical alchemy, Wendy became the fourth member of the trio on *For All I Care*. Her haunting voice adds a fresh and powerful dimension within the fabric of the group. Singing on eight numbers including Nirvana's "Lithium," Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb" (in which Reid sings a gorgeous harmony), Wilco's "Radio Cure," the Bee Gees' "How Deep is Your Love" and Heart's 70s rock anthem, "Barracuda," her storytelling privileges propel The Bad Plus' music into an exciting new place.

This past summer the PLUS previewed their new line-up at the North Sea Jazz Festival in Holland to an overwhelming audience response. "We wanted to test the waters," says King, "and the audience accepted vocals as a natural part of our evolution. The ovation left us stunned and speechless; it was just beautiful."

The addition of Wendy Lewis is not the only new direction The Bad Plus takes on *For All I Care*. The boundary breaking band also explored classical repertoire for the first time performing compositions by Ligeti, Babbit and Stravinsky.

Throughout an exhausting year of touring and working on new repertoire, The Bad Plus reconciled two seemingly irreconcilable concepts: an adaptation of pop and rock classics for jazz trio and voice and an adaptation of contemporary classical

repertoire for jazz trio. “We’ve always been interested in extremes,” said Iverson. In a way, Ligeti and Wilco on the same album are opposite extremes—yet together quite perfect. We’re interested that The Bad Plus provide each piece—whether it’s Stravinsky, a rock cover or originals—organic unity. They should make sense as songs...and collectively make sense as an album.”

To “make sense” is an understatement; *For All I Care* is the strongest album by The Bad Plus to date.