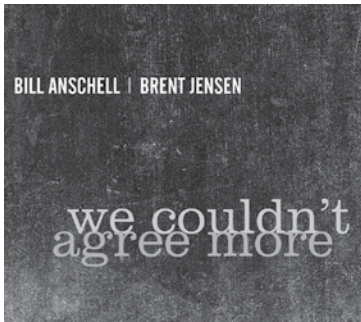


## CD Review



### Bill Anshell/Brent Jensen *We Couldn't Agree More*

Origin 82533

Don't even bother reading the next 500 words – just go buy pianist Bill Anshell and soprano saxophonist Brent Jensen's new album *We Couldn't Agree More* right now. But if you must read on, or need convincing, here you go: Anshell, a Seattle native, and Jensen, who teaches at the College of Southern Idaho in Twin Falls, recently met up on Jensen's 2007 quartet album *One More Mile*. Their latest collaboration is a pared down and intimate duo recording that features invigorating takes on several standards including "I'm Old Fashioned," "Just Friends," "What is this Thing Called Love?" as well as two Anshell/Jensen originals and two very different takes of Miles Davis' "Solar."

The musical rapport between Anshell and Jensen is astounding and is a big reason why this record is so compelling, dynamic and fresh. The duo format allows for the execution of numerous twists, turns and the flexibility to tweak each tune's time, form and tempo. Anshell and Jensen eschew the more traditional melody with separate accompaniment approach to duo playing for more of an integrated collaboration in which melody and accompaniment are often intertwined and the boundary

between them is blurred. Both men often hint at or arrive at the melody at the unexpected same time and often provide supportive or counter melodies for whoever happens to be taking the lead at the moment, such as on "I'm Old Fashioned."

Anshell's fast tumbling figures on "The People Versus Miss Jones" spur Jensen on and they often mimic, echo or predict the linear contour of Jensen's melodies. Jensen's soprano tone, which is reminiscent of Zoot Sims', is pure, clear, compact, and never spreads in the lower register. His articulation often recalls Lee Konitz's, with whom he studied, in that each note seems to be placed and shaped with a singular purpose; nothing is wasted or superfluous. At times Anshell effectively augments his right hand melodies with a secondary contrapuntal line much in the way Bach created counterpoint for non-chordal instruments. The album's brightest point is "You and the Night and the Music," and it's there where every one of this album's virtues can be found. It's also some of the most musically sublime five and a half minutes I've experienced recently.

Anshell and Jensen recorded *We Couldn't Agree More* in vocalist Jeff Baker's living room with only a few mikes, and as such, it has a highly personal and vital character that is often lacking in albums recorded and over-produced in the studio. It almost feels as if the listener is stealing a glimpse of a private concert. This session, which Anshell says "couldn't have been more natural or relaxing," conveys an air of spontaneity, excitement, surprise and joy that stems from the pleasure of joint musical discovery that's possible between two people who are comfortable with and trust one another. *We Couldn't Agree More* consistently throws sparks at the listener and comes with about as high a recommendation as I can give an album.

- Chris Robinson