

# The New York Times

## Music

By NATE CHINEN

Published: November 7, 2011

### 3 COHENS

*“Family”* (Anzic)

The title of the new album by the 3 Cohens carries two meanings, one literal and obvious and the other more metaphorical (but still pretty obvious). “Family,” also the name of one of the album’s more reflective tunes, refers to the bonds of siblinghood between the clarinetist and tenor saxophonist Anat Cohen, the trumpeter Avishai Cohen and the soprano saxophonist Yuval Cohen. The word also applies broadly to a constituency: the family of jazz, as it were. That might even be the connotation that matters most.

On their previous two albums, the Cohens put a primary emphasis on front-line intuition, often casting their lines in tight, tangled counterpoint. (One of those albums was meaningfully titled “Braid.”) They haven’t abandoned this device: it crops up in stretches of [“Shufra De Shufra,”](#) a swaggering opener by Avishai, and “Rhapsody in Blake,” a carbonated swinger by Yuval. But the seamlessness of the interplay is no longer a point to be proven for this band; “Family” concerns itself more avidly with jazz’s customs and canon.

It’s meant for anyone who appreciates bright and buoyant solos over percolating rhythm. (The rhythm section is superb: Aaron Goldberg on piano, Matt Penman on bass, Gregory Hutchinson on drums.) But the album feels aimed especially at those who understand its context — who recognize “Rhapsody in Blake,” for instance, as a boppish embroidery of the jazz standard “I Hear a Rhapsody.”

Let’s assume for a moment that you’re one of these people. You’ll gladly note a guest turn by Jon Hendricks, the wiry and venerable jazz singer, on two tracks. (You’ll also catch his nod to Dizzy Gillespie as he saunters through [“On the Sunny Side of the Street.”](#)) You’ll savor a few compositional allusions to Charles Mingus. You’ll admire the urgent flair that the Cohens bring to “The Mooche,” one of Duke Ellington’s 1920s themes. And surely you’ll recognize the four-note riff in Anat’s clarinet solo as a quote from Louis Armstrong’s “West End Blues.” (Bonus points if you could tell that it’s in the same key.)

But what if you’re not one of these people? There may still be something for you here, best personified by the sparkly, freewheeling arrangement that Anat has fashioned for the Dixieland warhorse “Tiger Rag.” That track, steeped as it is in history, feels springy and unbound. NATE CHINEN