

DOWN BEAT

Florian Weber

Lucent Waters
(ECM)

By [Paul de Barros](#) | Published February 2019

From the first crystalline chord of the opener, “Brilliant Waters,” German pianist Florian Weber’s quartet draws listeners into a shimmering, introspective, often slow-motion world that bristles with frisson. Part of the tension emanates from Weber’s pan-tonal melodies—unpredictable, yet oddly restful—but also from the quartet’s mercurial polyphony, reflecting the influence of his mentor, Paul Bley. The result is an exponential increase of the subtle interplay Weber showcased on *Alba*, a 2016 ECM album of duets with trumpeter Markus Stockhausen.

Lucent Waters sometimes also calls to mind the parched landscapes of the Scandinavian piano school. Is “From Cousteau’s Point Of View” a winking reference to E.S.T.’s “From Gagarin’s Point Of View”? It’s the third track in a series of water-themed tunes that move from twinkling surface to roiling falls to the exhilarating sense of floating weightless—underwater, not in space. The final track, “Schimmelreiter,” too, proceeds with a glacial, E.S.T.-like simplicity, the crucial difference being that motion and emotion triumph over irony and stasis.

Water references give way to a sweetly yearning homage to Lee Konitz, another mentor with whom Weber’s earlier trio recorded twice: “Honestlee” offers bassist Linda May Han Oh an opportunity to weave in her warm-toned magic, as does the pretty “Butterfly Effect,” on which she and Weber breathe organically. Trumpeter Ralph Alessi develops an expressive solo on that one, and also is featured on “Cousteau” and the dark, freewheeling “Fragile Cocoon.” Drummer Nasheet Waits breaks out on “Time Horizon,” with Oh throbbing beneath.