

Satoko Fujii – Zephyros

Now 45, Satoko Fujii continues to amaze with her florid and expansive explorations of sound-colour. Despite releasing 18 albums since the mid-90's, and though active in both the USA and her native Japan, she remains very much a minority enthusiasm.

Classically trained, with stints at both Berklee and the New England Conservatory, she took jazz lessons with Fumio Itabashi, who has worked with Ray Anderson and Elvin Jones, and she's benefitted hugely from a longstanding association with trumpeter Natsuki Tamura. He's part of the quartet here, along with electric bassist Takeharu Hayakawa and Ruins percussionist Tatsuya Yoshida. Reminiscent in place of British-Japanese pianist Akemi Kuniyoshi-Kuhn, Fujii weaves repetitive, songlike lines over rhythmic ostinati that combine Western and Asian harmonies and rhythms. "Flying To The South" is typical of her stop/start approach to melody. To some extent, Tamura is surplus to requirements here. The real action lies with the piano, drums and that strangely growling bass. Zephyros isn't her best work to date but it's up to Satoko's challenging standards.

Review courtesy of Brian Morton (The Wire)