

The Record Round-up

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BY MARC CHÉNARD ON 10 NOVEMBER 2023

SCENA JAZZ

François Houle Genera Sextet / Clean Feed Records, CF624CD



Vancouver clarinetist extraordinaire François Houle is a consummate virtuoso whose free improvisation is among the best in the field, and who can meet the demands of the most demanding new music scores. In addition to his performance skills, he is a most savvy composer and arranger, as testified to in this debut release with his Genera sextet, recorded for the Portuguese Clean Feed imprint. Leading a lineup of trustworthy accomplices such as pianist Benoît Delbecq and trombonist Samuel Blaser, Houle pays tribute to a man who actively promoted him—the late founding artistic director of the city’s jazz fest, Ken Pickering. The second of the nine tracks on his 50-minute side, appropriately titled *Requiem for KP*, sets the tone of the album: a heart-felt elegy to a guiding light of that city’s scene, who died in 2018. In a nutshell: contemporary chamber jazz at its finest.