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Hughes Trio's Improvised 'Blue'

By Mike Joyce

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"OUT OF THE BLUE" is an apt title for the debut release by the Fred Hughes Trio, since much of their music suggests a spirit of improvisation and discovery.

That's evident not only in the generous soloing space that punctuates the jazz trio's arrangements, but sometimes in the writing as well. Several of the original pieces, such as the title tune, "Tokyo Subway" and "New Worlds," imaginatively expand on simple patterns or distinct themes. All three of the trio's members -- pianist Fred Hughes, bassist Tom Williams and drummer Keith Killgo -- are accorded plenty of room for expression, but Hughes is the album's principal architect and a source of obvious inspiration to his bandmates. By turns ruminative, fluid and funky, his playing is chiefly responsible for the album's appealing colors and moods. Killgo displays his customary subtlety and drive, while Williams contributes the album's most evocative ballad, a piece inspired by a visit to Japan called "Tamana."

Also gracing the album are a few standards that are freshened by the trio's close-knit collaborations and yield the recording's strongest melodies.

THE FRED HUGHES TRIO -- "Out of the Blue" (Hughes).
Appearing Friday and Saturday at the Nest in the Willard Hotel.

To hear a free Sound Bite from this album, call Post-Haste at 202/334-9000 and press 8110. (Prince William residents, call 690-4110.)

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