

***Phil Donkin***

*The Gate*

Whirlwind Recordings WR4668

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**Phil Donkin (b), Ben Wendel (ts), Glenn Zaleski (p) and Jochen Rückert (d).**  
**Rec. August 2013**

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Expectations have been running high concerning the career of Phil Donkin for close to a decade now. Graduating from the Guildhall in 2003, he made a glowing impression as a member of his contemporary Gwilym Simcock's first group on his 2007 debut *Perception* and impressive contributions to recordings with Ivo Neame and Seb Pipe followed. Demos of the Sunderland-born bassist's own material emerged early on too and seemed to signal something a bit special on the horizon, but Donkin packed his bags and disappeared to New York making a splash on the scene there (highly regarded NYC musicians such as Drew Gress and Matt Penman have sung his praises) for the next four years before resettling in Berlin recently. It's all fuel for his invigorating debut *The Gate* out on the prolific London-based Whirlwind Recordings. Donkin shows the kind of assertive rhythmic drive and bold sonic presence we've been hearing from the Phronesis leader Jasper Hoiby and an ear for the nuances of latin and Brazilian music is similarly evident in both his writing (all are originals aside from takes on Monk's 'Introspection' and Shostakovich's 'Prelude no 23 in F Major') and playing. The New York-based tenor saxophonist Ben Wendel's soloing contribution is fluently conversational and features alongside lively newcomer Glenn Zaleski on piano and the excellent German native but New York-adopted drummer Jochen Rückert, a longtime acquaintance of Donkin's who's star studded line-up (including Mark Turner) featured on CDs for both Whirlwind and Pirouet. Donkin has waited for the right moment with a debut straight from the top drawer. **Selwyn Harris**