

# Ryan Meagher

(pronounced Marr)

## Tone

Fresh Sound New Talent Records

[www.ryanmeagher.com](http://www.ryanmeagher.com)

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Fresh Sound New Talent (FSNT) is the record label known for launching the careers of some of modern jazz's most recognizable names (i.e.: Brad Mehldau, Kurt Rosenwinkel, Ambrose Akinmusire, the Bad Plus, Robert Glasper, etc.). Founder of FSNT, Jordi Pujol, seems intent on staking a claim on the career of another budding star, Ryan Meagher (pronounced Marr), much like he did of Meagher's predecessors on the label. Meagher's debut album on FSNT, *Atroefy*, received much critical acclaim as well as garnering tons of airplay on jazz radio stations and internet stations by presenting a unique brand of music he self-markets as "modern jazz for the indie rocker".

Meagher's follow up record on FSNT, *Tone*, departs from his angsty suburban roots by capturing both the untamed expanse and the chaotic architecture of the mountains to which he feels connected. The holdovers from *Atroefy* to *Tone* include the same rhythm section that drive the carefully crafted compositions, jazz/rock aesthetic, and impressive improvisation for which Meagher has made himself known (Geoff Kraly on electric bass and Vinnie Sperrazza on drums [FSNT album *343-Peak Inn* and *373-Barcelona Holiday*]). However, personnel changes were made between the two albums. Matt Blostein (a saxophonist who has collaborated with both Kraly & Sperrazza on the Yeah-Yeah Records' *Ursa Minor* and *Paraphrase*) and Shane Endsley, trumpeter of the groundbreaking jazz group *Kneebody*. And there are tunes on *Tone* that clearly show Meagher has not lost his modern jazz/indie rock edge (i.e.: *Run and Gun*, *The Intolerable*, *Sherner*, and *Bad Time*), but by and large the space of this album is much more apparent than that of *Atroefy*.

Tunes like *Alpenglow* (a free improvisation based upon three prescribed notes and a helpful definition of the title) exhibit the freedom as well as the structure of the natural world towards which Meagher clearly shows an affinity. *Farad's Challenge* is a tune inspired by a difficult stretch of river on which Meagher frequently fly-fishes. The improvisation on *Farad* is completely free, with no predetermined material beyond the angular, composed melody. The closing track on the record, *Walther's Pond*, is a personal reflection of past autumns spent in the pastoral paradise of the town of Blairstown, NJ.

Noted jazz scholar and one of Meagher's educators, David Ake, has pointed out that because of its urban roots, nature is a subject oft overlooked by jazz musicians and audiences alike. In *Tone*, Meagher seems unafraid of taking the cue from jazz artists such as Keith Jarrett, Bill Frisell, and Pat Metheny who have incorporated an American sense of idyllic landscapes. However, Meagher's grasp of the natural world does not dominate his entire artistic concept. With this addition to his already established adaptation of grunge rock and jazz aesthetics (in both *Atroefy* and *Tone*) Meagher is able to meld his upbringing in the urban, suburban, and rural worlds alike. With *Tone*, Meagher offers the listener a more personal, mature look inside the experience of one of modern jazz's most individual voices.

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