

Newark Star Ledger:
Peter Zak Trio
(Steeplechase)

three stars

Pianist Peter Zak, who's been heard around New York with the late singer Etta Jones, trumpeter Ryan Kisor and saxophonist Eric Alexander, among others, is a young artist worthy of attention. Here making his first CD on an international jazz label, Zak plays splendidly with bass powerhouse Paul Gill and the protean drummer Al Foster. It's an exceptional trio.

With influences ranging from Bill Evans and to Bud Powell, Zak favors melodically rich playing with harmonic depth and supple rhythm. Everything here is good, from the leader's fleet and attractive "Better Late Than Never" and the eloquent Monk ballad "Ugly Beauty," to Joe Henderson's Latin-bent blues "Mamacita" and the standard "Namely You," just one spot where Gill demonstrates his gifts as a soloist.

■ Zan Stewart