

## A Guitarist-Led Quintet, Packing a Forceful Arsenal

The guitarist Adam Rogers specializes in a turbocharged, sleekly designed, ultimately armored brand of postbop. His compositions, with their harmonic

### MUSIC REVIEW

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and rhythmic feints, can suggest complex spring-loaded devices. His playing, skillful to the point of superfluity, can impart a similarly mechanical feel. There are bolts of daring and imagination in his enterprise, but not a shred of vulnerability and only traces of warmth.

None of this closes off the possibility of good music, as Mr. Rogers periodically proved on Tuesday night, in his debut as a leader at the Village Vanguard. The week's first set was well paced and sharply executed, with more than enough sparks flying among the five musicians onstage. On its merits it was an impressive performance.

Mr. Rogers played two songs apiece from his first album, "Art of the Invisible," and his second, "Allegory." As on both of those records, which were issued by the Dutch label Criss Cross, he featured the articulate pianist Edward Simon and the attentive bassist Scott Colley. Rounding out the group were two more strong and distinctive voices, the tenor saxophonist Mark Turner and the drummer Jeff (Tain) Watts, who did an admirable job of asserting themselves inside the parameters of the music.

The set opener, a tricked-out version of Jerome Kern's "Long Ago and Far Away," established two separate modes of inquiry for Mr. Rogers and Mr. Turner. The guitar solo, which came first, was neatly episodic. Beginning with cool-headed long tones it moved on to a choice offering of runs, then a syncopated holding pattern, and finally an open-faucet profusion. The tenor solo felt less concrete and more exploratory, especially as Mr. Turner unfurled his strange arpeggios to an improvised sequence of chords.

Mr. Rogers presented one new piece, a classically inflected prelude called "Sight," and followed it with a dazzling solo cadenza.

*Adam Rogers continues through Sunday at the Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Avenue South, at 11th Street, West Village, (212) 255-4037, [villagevanguard.com](http://villagevanguard.com).*



JACK VARTOOGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS

Adam Rogers leading a set at the Village Vanguard.

**Adam Rogers**  
*Village Vanguard*

This in turn drifted into a modal polyrhythmic waltz, in the vein of the John Coltrane Quartet. Because that song, "Phrygia," provoked some searching actions from Mr. Rogers, and because no

*Music with strong, distinctive and assertive voices.*

one alive plays this sort of groove more compellingly than Mr. Watts, it registered as uncharted and fiercely soulful.

But what came next was more characteristic: "Confluence," a slippery exercise with the rhythm section pulling toward one pulse and the melody insisting on another. After this brainy opening the full band downshifted into a fast, bright swing, and the sense of release was palpable. So was the intensity of Mr. Rogers during his solo, which involved a rat-a-tat cadence and a spirit of propulsive burn, along with a burnished self-assurance.