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THE REVIEW of JAZZ & BLUES: CREATIVE IMPROVISED MUSIC

Interviews With:

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News::Book Reviews::Record Reviews

Sassy undertones. Her new rhythm team is potentially supportive. Doug Miller adds some lovely arco playing to her ardent reading of "Late." "Breath" is an infrequently sung torcher from "City Of Angels," which ran successfully during the '89-'90 Broadway season, and Janis clearly takes the lyrics personally. "Taught" is a rhapsodic McCoy Tyner ballad, and the lady's passionate reading gives it fair measure. The lyric is by Sammy Cahn, whose name was inadvertently (?) omitted from the liner's song credits. Doug Miller's bass ushers in an up tempo "Come Home," which contains brisk statements from Fuller and Acox, as well as some well placed Mann scat. Both Fuller and Miller have commanding solos on a loping "Devil Moon." And one could go on to point to each and every track as a highlight, so consistent is the music throughout. No question about it, this is a vocalist who has come into her own, with complete command of her vocal instrument, repertoire, and musical environment. She has found a complementary rhythm team, so the album is the sort I prefer - one where the vocalist raises a sweat equal to that of her accompanists.

Alan Bargebuhr

1) EITHER/ORCHESTRA, NEO-MODERNISM, ACCURATE 3284.

Los olvidados / baby invents monk / the modernist / fast edd / heavily amplified hairpiece. 43:38.

Tom Halter, tpt; Colin Fisher, tpt; Joel Yennior, tbn; Jeremy Udden, as; Russ Gershon, ts, ss; Charlie Kohlase, bari s; Gregory Burk, p, Rhodes piano, Moog, Univox; Rick McLaughlin, b; Harvey Wirht, d, cymbals, cowbell; Vicente Lebron, congas, bongos, perc. June 5-7, 2001, Providence, RI.

2) RICK McLAUGHLIN, STUDY OF LIGHT, ACCURATE 5048.

assev vif - tres rythme / ink / marina / o.p. / blink to be / delicate / colours of chloe / isfahan / without a song. 71:45.

McLaughlin, b; Greg Burk, p; Jeremy Udden, saxes. Fall 2001 & Spring 2002, Westwood, MA.

3) KEN SCHAPHORST, DANE RICHESON, MATT TURNER, INDIGENOUS TECHNOLOGY, ACCURATE 5049.

Introduction / Mode for Max / Slide / Shades Of Bronze / Desert Places / Indigenous Technology / See Through You / Looking East / Invisible Choir / Translucency / Interlude / Mbira / Blink. 69:35.

Schaphorst, tpt, flgh, p; Dane Richardson, marimba, perc; Matt Turner, cel. December 7-8, 1999. Bailey's Harbor, WI.

Three new releases from Russ Gershon's label, Accurate. Gershon is the leader of Either/Orchestra, and this version of the group has quite a few new members. (2) is a trio made up of current E/O members.

I haven't had my ears pinned back (and enjoyed it) in quite some time. Either/Orchestra (1) comes out of the blocks on all cylinders. "Los Olvidados" ("the oblivious ones") sets the tone for the rest of the album, starting off with a bass groove, and is shortly joined by piano, then drums.

The piano adds harmony to the bass line, gradually adding more dissonances, and the feel is kind of spooky but with intense anticipation. The brass then enter in unison, with the reeds providing counter figures. Everyone except the rhythm section (including piano) drops out and Halter then lets go for a truly incredible solo as the band slowly adds figures here and there. He reaches a peak with some high-end blasting, as the band plays the theme underneath. I was mesmerized, the hairs standing up on my neck and arms. The band is very, very powerful and, at peak roar, using Gershon's scoring, gets quite a full, extremely driving, intense sound. The piece ends with a fade as the bass instruments play the theme. "baby invents monk" could be viewed as a take on Thelonious' esthetic, his humor that always accompanied the seriousness of the music. The tune opens with tuned drums playing, both rhythmically and melodically, what will be recognized shortly as the theme. When Kohlase plays the theme with piano and bass accompaniment, it seems trite and funny, but when the band gets a hold of it and swings it very straight, it seems funny in a different way. Burk then takes over with just drums and bass, totally refracting it (almost as Monk would), pushing the bar lines around, twisting the originally simple harmony, while the band coolly swings behind him. When the full band returns to the melody, it shines, as the band trades with the drums and congas. McLaughlin solos arco, while the band teases him with the theme in a sort of irreverent way. The sound thickens, Fisher solos over the band playing the theme in a different rhythm until the band takes over again, eventually returning to more "normal" scoring—quite a trip! "the modernist" starts out with a thick thematic declamation, then Gershon solos to the now swinging rhythm. The rhythmic feel changes continually as Burk comps and the band fills in behind Gershon, gradually building, only to suddenly drop out, adding players slowly, leading to a Fisher solo. The arranging of Gershon is remarkable, never letting up, but allowing much soloing while having the feel of a very tight band that knows what to do at the right time. "fast edd" is the only piece not written by Gershon (misspelled "rershon" in the liner) and starts off with a fast unison figure by the whole bottom of the band. The theme is stated with a sort of Latin feel, but then cuts to a very fast, tight swing, and Udden lets fly with an amazing line that never rests. His sound is so pure that I had to remind myself it was a reed (more on that later). He keeps playing with just drums and bass behind him until it just stops for a brass interlude, only to charge out again into the driving swing with Burk doing great things in between Udden's moans, slides and arpeggios in answer and response. After four tremendous cuts I was a little disappointed by "heavily amplified hairpiece" with its funk groove, static harmony, and unchanging drumming; the feel is that of a let's-have-some-fun romp. I guess in relation to the earlier great stuff, this compares poorly. In any case, I can easily recommend *neo-modernism* to anyone, despite the relatively short runtime; great music!

Rick McLaughlin's trio (2) makes up 30% of the Ether/Orchestra (sharing their fondness for lowercase letters) and clearly shares that irreverent seriousness that is so apparent in (1). The notes by McLaughlin give some insight into the origins and takes on the pieces. The sound and rhythmic drive of the trio displays a tribute to the talents of each player. Udden steals the record; his sound is unearthly and at times I thought he was playing a flute, not a reed. Burk is very inventive in both lines and chord voicings; my only quibble is that he plays very hard, perhaps as a result of being in the E/O and needing to carry over them. The tunes are a mixture of originals (tracks 2, 5 by Burk and 3,6 by McLaughlin) mixed with arrangements of mostly unfamiliar tunes. The styles range from straight Swing to something approaching modern "Classical" music. "assev vif" is a theme from the Ravel String Quartet and at first is played straight (re-instrumented of course). Udden's entry is what sounds like a flute no matter how closely I listen. The difference between Classical "vertical" rhythm and Jazz "horizontal" rhythm is immediately apparent, and for me is the primary difference between the two musics. The theme is pretty, but when we enter Jazz land after the statement, the square theme is taken apart by each player, both separately and together. I have no idea how much was arranged. The players pass things around, clearly listening and picking up figures from each other. Sometimes Burk takes the lead, sometimes Udden, with McLaughlin always busy underneath. This is an extremely interesting track that displays inspired improvisers. "ink," a Burk composition, is described as combining freely improvised and through-composed sections. To these ears, it sounded like a lot of Classical music I have heard, and I missed the Jazz feel. Fear not, though, because the next track, "marina," is a triumph. Named after McLaughlin's wife, it mixes two periods of his life when he was immersed in Bach and Latin Jazz. Starting with unaccompanied bass playing a theme clearly related to, but not copied from, Bach, McLaughlin plays out of time. He plucks hard and always gets a full, deep, big sound, and my guess is that his action is on the high side. He then leads into a version of the theme that has a Latin feel but without leaving Jazz behind. Burk and Udden come in, calling to one another, trading lines, expanding and completing each other's thoughts while the bass theme continues underneath. They maintain an amazing drive. "o.p." was written by Sam Jones and McLaughlin states that there are few recordings of it. It features a great melody, so easy to remember that one can follow without too much difficulty the twists and turns Udden and Burk put it through, as the bass walks and moves things along. "blink to be" shows an entirely different side of Burk, and McLaughlin jokes that this tune might "turn us into an international pop sensation." Of course it won't, despite the pretty, catchy tune. This trifle is given masterful treatment at the hands of Burk and Udden with McLaughlin providing the rhythm by playing counter melodies. "Without A Song" is perhaps the best known tune and is given a straight treatment with

Udden stating the theme and Burk replying with the bridge. The tune is then taken for a ten minute ride by Udden and Burk, now playing alternating improvisations that feature very, very long lines, particularly by Burk, while being pushed by the bass. McLaughlin takes a wonderful solo, accompanied by piano. His deep pulling is very audible. More trading by Udden and Burk follows, leading to a thematic restatement by Udden and what normally would be the end, but the group picks up steam again and builds on a static chord, playing with bits and pieces of the theme, gradually getting more and more abstract. The tension keeps rising in wait for the end that refuses to come until finally Burk signals the end with some cadential chords and Udden plays harmonics until the final tonic chord. Great stuff, extremely inventive, full of humor and deep thought. Highly recommended.