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Sound-Lee

Dutch treat

The only way to re-create someone else's music, bassist William Parker once said, is to admit it can't be done; then you can start to play the music *your* way. That's what the Sound-Lee Quintet did with the music of Lee Konitz last Saturday night at Zeitgeist—they reimagined the heady, contrapuntal cool jazz of the Lenny Tristano school in their own voices. This witty band, co-led by Dutch pianist-composer Guus Janssen and Dutch saxophonist Jorrit Dijkstra (currently living in Boston), played two sets that were an unpredictable mixture of respectful interpretation, daring attempts at stretching limits, and outright subversion of the material. They played the melodies straight and often stayed within the tune, then would launch an ambush on the structure when it was least expected. If jazz is the sound of surprise, this was jazz as the sound of surprise attack.

Janssen, who had already recorded most of the material with Dijkstra on last year's outstanding *Sound-Lee!* (Geestgronden), was the evening's primary subversive. His solos were crazy quilts of references from stride to free jazz, patched together with deliberate incongruity and often with a Monkishly perverse sense of rhythm. On "Ablution," he pecked out an errant, herky-jerky melody with his left hand while his right hand played rippling Tristano-like lines. He often did his best to disrupt proceeding as he comped, too, interjecting a comically mechanical riff at regular intervals behind Dijkstra during "Kary's Trance," a Konitz ballad.

Dijkstra clearly relishes the tunes, and you could feel him looking for ways to stretch them in new directions from within. On "Hi Beck," his dusky lines corkscrewed seamlessly through the changes in a manner that any Tristano-ite would approve, but he brought something new to the music as he pushed it to further harmonic extremes and agitated rhythmic variations and highlighted his phrases with vocal inflections.



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The Dutchmen were working with an alert Boston-area rhythm section of guitarist Eric Hofbauer, bassist Rick McLaughlin, and drummer Curt Newton for the first time, but they sounded like a band. They knew when to play it straight, sensed how far a tune could stretch, and weren't afraid to cast it away and play freely, either. The original versions of these tunes straitjacketed the bass and drums into background timekeeping, while the piano and horns wove dense counterpoint on top. It was a great joy to hear this band upend the soloist-accompanist hierarchy and create a richer, five-way dialogue that recast these 50-year-old jazz classics in a new mold.

BY ED HAZELL

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