

NEW ISSUES

*/ BACKYARD FREE BOP /
FARSIGHTED FRIENDSHIP. 48:36.*

Fewell, g, slide, perc; Hofbauer,
g, metal box, perc. March & April
2006, Boston, MA.

6) MADS THORSEN STRINGS & THINGS

CALIBRATED 57

*POINT THE WAY / DET MIN
HYLDE (IT'S MY SHELF) / SONG
FOR LEO / PIERROT / OUR BLUES
/ SONDERHO / WAS IT IN TAHITI?
/ MY BLUE HOTEL / GLASTYRKER
(GLASSTURK). 47:09.*

Thorsen, g; Niclas Knudsen,
g; Martin Andersen, d; Guffi
Pallesen, b. Autumn 2006,
no location given.

7) DAVE ASKREN TRIO NUEVO +

DAWAY 20

*TIENE TYNER / NAIMA / BUT
BEAUTIFUL / RECORDAME / WE'LL
BE TOGETHER AGAIN / EPISTROPHY
/ PEGGY'S BLUE SKYLIGHT / YES OR
NO / P.M. 51:58.*

Askren, g; Eddie Resto, b; Walter
Rodriguez, d, perc; Ramon Banda,
d. August – September 2007,
Monrovia, CA.

8) DC IMPROVISERS COLLECTIVE TRIANGULATION

IMPROV ARTS 1

*THEN DON'T LISTEN / MUSEUM
OF COMMERCE AND WAR /*

and “Dogon Delta Blues”; and the slide mangled strings on “Eye of Nkisi” or the mutant porch music on “A Cajun Raven.” This is a love song to the guitar, in all its idiomatic strangeness, by two fine practitioners. And it’s a vibrant, imaginative, and—wait for it—fun record.

Funny, but I was just revisiting some of John Scofield’s mid-1990s records which paired him with fellow guitarists. Coming across Thorsen’s record (6), with fellow six-stringer Knudsen joining the trio, I was reminded of Sco’s basic materials reimagined for post-post-Bop listeners. It’s rootsy and swinging stuff, with one foot in Jim Hall, the other clearly in the Abercrombie-Sco continuum. The tunes are pretty fun, ranging from swinging raveups like the opening “Point the Way” to mid-tempo groovers like “Pjerrot” or dreamy ballads such as “Det Min Hylde.” At the heart of the music’s charm is the convivial interplay between Thorsen and Knudsen, knotty and lyrical at once, choppy and laid-back in equal measure, with a bit of spike and twang to their tones. There’s a major misstep with “My Blue Hotel,” a sort of clumsily reimagined “Afro Blue,” but other than that the album’s quite fun.

(7) is a bit of an odd bird. Acoustic specialist Askren plays a rhythmically complex, Latin-influenced music that’s mostly quite satisfying (but it has some inexplicably smooth moments). Some of the settings are a bit awkward. Kudos for changing up “Naima” but it just doesn’t work to my ears (likewise the too plodding “Peggy’s Blue Skylight”). However, “But Beautiful” works quite charmingly, as do their funky up reimaginings of “Recordame” and “Epistrophy.” Shorter’s “Yes or No” might be the best example of how well this group’s Latin approach can work (some smart song choices don’t hurt either). And in general the band’s limber, playing with a kind of reserve and intimacy without sacrificing good energy and momentum. Pleasant stuff, with its own character.

The D.C. Improvisers Collective (8) takes things in a different direction (by the way, don’t think I don’t spot the Ravens jersey on the cover, guys). With some limber reed work, clacking percussion, and a resounding Strat (with delay pedals and so forth) this group gets closer to the sound of Brad Shepik, the Tiny Bell Trio, and mid-90s “downtown” stuff than anything free improv. But really, what do labels matter? “Museum of Commerce and War” opens with a nice full drone from reeds/feedback, and morphs into a kind of vamp and from there into a long open section filled with dark rubato playing and clouds of electronics. It’s the kind of multi-directional flight these guys often take. And across the record, one hears a brief spasm of noisy free funk on “Punk Jazz”; several passages for cranky

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PUNK JAZZ / TRIANGULATION / MAN VERSUS NATURE / TRANSCENDENTAL MEDIATION / THE GIRL FROM QUARNA SOTTO / MOURNING IN AMERICA / FEW THINGS ARE CONSTANT / DREAM TO SLEEP. 57:06.

Ben Azzara, d, perc; Jonathan Matis, g, elec; Mike Sebastian, ts, saxello, bcl. June 2-4, 2006, Arlington, VA.

9) ANDY BROWN TRIO AND SOLO

STRING DAMPER 2132

I JUST CAN'T SEE FOR LOOKIN' / MY SHINING HOUR / RECADO BOSSA NOVA / YOU'RE BLASÉ / YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE / CITY LIGHTS / IT'S SOMETHING THAT YOU OUGHT TO KNOW / WITH THE WIND AND THE RAIN IN YOUR HAIR / ISN'T IT A PITY / LULLABY OF THE LEAVES / SCOTT'S LULLABY / VEM SO / SAMBALAMENTO / I'M THROUGH WITH LOVE / LOVE LETTERS / LONDON BY NIGHT. 69:56.

Brown, g; Jake Vinsel, b; Mike Schlick, d. March 2007, no location given.

10) MIKE MINASI BODY RESILIENT

MINASIJAZZ, NO#

CHICK / DOSCH / BODY RESILIENT / BETHANY RAG / DO IT LATER. 30:08.

Minasi, g; Dave Anderson, b; Thierry Arpino, d. Catskill, NY (no dates given).

Strat chokes and wrestling holds, kinda like Raoul Bjorkenheim; and skirling saxophones on "Man Versus Nature" and the reflective "The Girl from Quarna Sotto" (the saxophonist elsewhere digs in on tenor in a Butcher-influenced fashion). In general the music is equal parts uncertainty and innovation, as if they're not really sure what they want to accomplish but they're having too much fun trying and then discarding ideas to really care.

In the old days, (9) would be two separate albums. But since everyone feels compelled to stuff their discs to the gills, the competent, gentlemanly Brown has included eight trio tracks and seven solo tracks on this disc. It's extremely limber mainstream stuff, and even more laid-back, like a latter-day Charlie Byrd record or something. There are very similar loping mid-tempo throughout, though occasionally shifting into a bright double-time (as on the Jimmy McGriff swinger "Bright City"). In my opinion, their laconic mode works best on straight ballad performances like "You're Blasé." But there's certainly a generally amiable glow about the set. In some sense, Brown's patient contrapuntal style sounds a bit better in the solo setting than even the trio; he doesn't sound quite as rhythmically limber here, but he's able to work the details in a way that might get lost elsewhere. Overall, not bad.

Minasi's brief (10) is a confident and limber mainstream session. Clean of tone, fluid of line, and influenced by the usual suspects, the leader plays with a winning style. Anderson and Arpino are especially exuberant, and they exult in the Latin-influenced "Chick." I was also fond of the Metheny-influenced "Dosch," which I thought was slightly too brief—there was good trio synergy as the players dug into the nice major-to-minor intervals. Similar energy and melodic invention are heard on "Bethany Rag." I didn't really dig the title track too much, as I found Anderson a bit too busy and the Miles quotes a bit wearying. But on balance, this one is about as pleasing as a lot of releases that get much more publicity.

It's a shame that (11) sat on the shelf for nearly two decades. Guitarist Slovak—a patient and lyrical player, with a tone and imagination not unlike Metheny in his more down-tempo moods—writes that she gave up shopping it to labels in 1993 and concentrated on other recordings on her own Slovak Music label. It's good that it's finally seeing the light of day, as it's filled with fine, no-frills mainstream Jazz, with four sympathetic and smart players. The spare melodic style the guitarist favors contrasts well with Hersch's slightly more ornate playing; and "O Solo Mole" is a piano/guitar duo where you can study this in detail. The nice solo piece "Twice" is quite melancholy, with some nice minor seconds that somehow