

NEW ISSUES

1) NORBERT STEIN DIRECT SPEECH

PATA 19

CHAMELEON NATURE / MUSIC FOR STAND-ALONE PLAYER / FOR: GET IT! / DIE TOCHTER DES PAPSTES / DIE ZEN GEBOTE / DAILY LIFE / NO BIRD BEYOND THE CAGE / LES YEUX DE L'OISEAU DE LA GUERRE / DIRECT SPEECH / ALICE IN DER PARALLELEN WELT / BORDERLINE. 69:35.

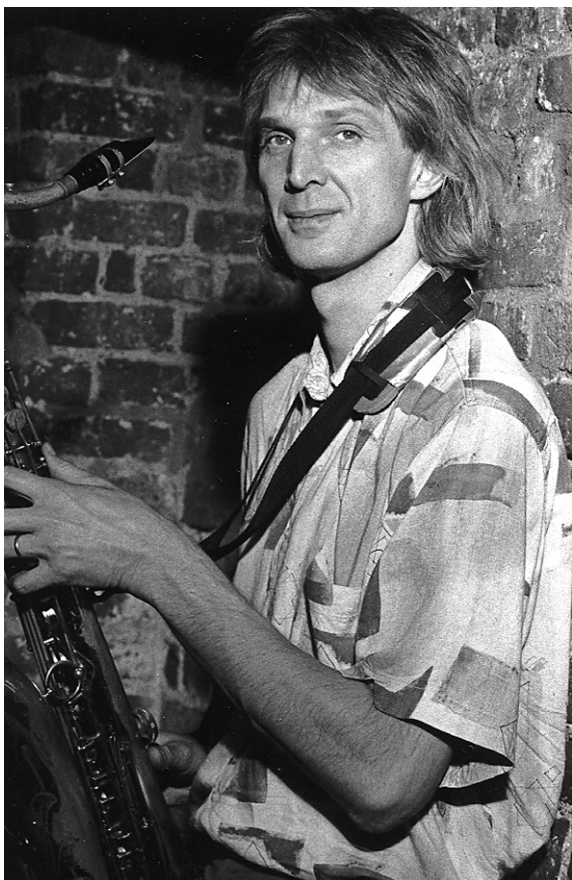
Stein, ts; Michael Heupel, flt; Matthias Muche, tbn; Sebastian Gramms, b; Christoph Haberer, d. Feb. 2008, Bonn, Germany.

2) BEAT KELLER KELLER'S 10

UNIT 4213

SYD BARRETT / PIANO-PIECE NO. 1 / GREEN / DIMP (TAKE 1) / KANON 1 / FOR 4 / ROCKTHING / KANON 2 POLYTONAL / DIMP (TAKE 2) / MACHINE / FUGA INTRO / FUGA / FOR 4-ROCKTHING (LIVE) / MINIATURE NR. 1 / SHORT PIECE. 54:38.*

Keller, cond; Reto Anneler, as, ss, flt; Rafael Schilt, ts, bcl; Matthias Tschoop, bari, s, bcl; Matthias Spillmann, tpt, flgh; Claudio Bergamin, tpt, flgh; Michael Flury, tbn; Fabian Beck, b tbn; Andreas Meili, p, kybd; Peter Gossweiler, b; Marius Peyer, d, perc; Patrick Schnyder, rds*; Dave Blaser, tpt, flgh*. Oct. 28 & 29, 2007, Zurich, Switzerland (and Feb. 23, 2008, Zurich, Switzerland*).



Norbert Stein courtesy of Norbert Stein

I've enjoyed everything I've heard from Stein's Pata Generators, and (1) is no exception. From the start, the band plays with uncontained imagination, opening with the disc in a Babel of voices, a swirl of noise from which a quirky, drunken flute/tenor pairing emerges, leading into some Braxtonian unisons. Stein leads the pack with a lusty, Shepp-inflected tenor narrative, with wry muted asides from Muche. But one of the things I like best about this band is that, as complex as the compositions get, as many directions as they take, they all sound organic, as if Freely improvised, rather than wooden or unfocused. It makes perfect sense, somehow, when the crystal meth waltz that opens "For: Get It!" suddenly disappears

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Wilbert De Jooode by Frank Rubolino



Ali Sakkal by Frank Rubolino

and leaves Stein channeling his inner Shepp once more (although I cringed at the “Aqualung” quote). Their approach has got the virtues of a good Vandermark Five record, especially in its catholic approach to rhythm (Haberer and Gramms are continually shifting on “Music for Stand-alone Player,” for example, and they sound great throughout). In these pursuits, they don’t indulge overmuch in crafty reharmonizations for the sake of it. Rather, when they do so it’s in order to provide grit and edge, as on the occasionally sour notes they get from minor seconds and so on. But more often they resort to overlapping lines that put a spotlight on the winds players who are so superb here: Muche’s sassy and swinging trombone on “Die Zen” and the dark “Direct Speech”; the leader’s tart lines on “Alice in der Parallelen Welt” or the impressionistic “Daily Life”; and perhaps most memorable of all, Heupel’s tremendous work on “Die Tochter” and “Les Yeux,” and even on the noisy free time closer. Another winner from this lot.

(2) features another group that’s equally fidgety as far as being confined by genre. What else could characterize a mid-size Jazz ensemble that opens its record with a dedication to Syd Barrett (complete with echoes from “Astronomy Domine” and “Gigolo Aunt”) but does it in chugging, oompah style. By inclination, they’re not dissimilar from Stein’s group, although they’re less focused on rhythm and the idioms they shuffle through are different. They also don’t load things down with overly complex voicings, because the palette’s rich enough on its own, given the instrumentation. This is more like a repertory band, with an enduring jones for late 1930s Ellington, that caught a cold from mid-1970s Willem Breuker. I say this in part because of the similarity in instrumental colors that exists among these ensembles, from Flury’s superb muted work to the elegant piano cadenzas to the sax counterpoints everywhere (though there are also some outlying colors, as with the wah-wah Rhodes on “Rockthing”). But it’s also because of both composers’—and, by influence, this ensemble’s—fluidity with genre and attention to specific kinds of groupings and voicings. The close harmony of “Green,” evolving slowly into a vaguely Asiatic theme, with tension coming from some contrary motion, positively screams late period Ellington. Whereas the uses of tutti squalling, boisterous pulse-tracks, and occasionally just a bit too serious notions like “Fuga” all suggest the Kollektief to me. And if this group doesn’t exactly make anything too personal out of these influences, well, as influences they’re hard to beat. So this one’s enjoyable on its own merits.

Jason Bivins