

Lost Thoughts|Scott Tinkler/Simon Barker|Kimnara NARA008

Before surrealism was usurped in the public imagination by hallucinatory painted images, the movement was primarily bent on directly accessing the subconscious via writing without technical, aesthetic, or moral filters. Such purity is approached by trumpeter Scott Tinkler and drummer Simon Barker in these improvised duets. Where much so-called free improvisation is intent on not being “polluted” by such mundanity as conventional melody, harmony or rhythm—and therefore is anything but free—these conversations between two long-term colleagues are allowed to follow the thread of invention unfettered. They range from a meditative temple of gongs and whispered horn to the thundering tom-toms of the apocalypse with napalm blasts of trumpet. Always the myriad sounds arrest and engage, so you never feel you’re eavesdropping on a private conversation.

Expensive Habit|Sean Wayland|SEED CD009|seanwayland.com

Sean Wayland writes wonderful melodies. The aptly titled *Beautiful* catches the ear the way a rose does the eye, and draws you to it for closer scrutiny of the tune’s contours, which are wrapped in an engaging breeziness. Then you want to hear it again, or whistle it. When you listen closely to Wayland’s piano (and synthesizer) solos, that same gift for melodies is hard at work, but is presented in such an unassuming fashion that it could pass you by, as your attention wanders to the brilliant rhythm section players who, like Wayland, are New York-based. German drummer Jochen Ruekert displays unflinching verve in negotiating the rapid twists of *Arc Etude*, which also features a spitfire solo from guitarist James Muller and the authoritative bass of Kiwi Matt Penman.



As Wide as the Sky|Tony Gorman/Bobby Singh|Birdland BL008

What a perfect circle: this music was recorded at Birdland Records, published by Birdland and then sold by Birdland. Filling the circle is Tony Gorman’s infinitely nuanced clarinet playing, perhaps less anguished than on his mesmerising *Songs of Hope* album, but no less moving. In fact, this pensive music is so devoid of affectation

it seems to bore its way directly through your sternum with no mental processing and with no concern for labels beyond an awareness of the purity of the improvising. Gorman begins by himself, gently accompanied by synthetic drones, before being joined by tabla wizard Bobby Singh on four duets. Miraculously, Singh seems to compound rather than dilute the sense of intimacy; the sense that the music is being whispered in your ear, like a confession from a best friend.



Early and Late|Steve Lacy, Rosewell Rudd Quartet|Cuneiform Rune 250/251 (2CDs)

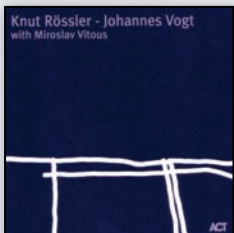
This double CD’s name refers to the fact that the quartet co-led by the late soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy and trombonist Rosewell Rudd is represented both at its beginning (1962) and end (1999–2002). From 1962 comes a session with the founding

father of free-jazz drumming, Dennis Charles, and bassist Bob Cunningham. This was only a few years after Lacy and Rudd had leapt from Dixieland to the outer reaches of modernity, and their band was dedicated to Thelonious Monk’s music, although one Cecil Taylor tune sticks its head up amid Charles’ loose-limbed, highly swinging propulsion. The later material, recorded live, is mostly Lacy’s. The more austere elements of his distinctively dark-toned soprano contrast sharply with Rudd’s explosive ebullience, unleashed over Jean-Jacques Avenel’s brilliant bass playing and John Betsch’s volatile drumming.

He Never Mentioned Love|Claire Martin|Linn/Rockian AKD295

Claire Martin is maturing nicely, slotting the final pieces into place to fulfil her promise as an exceptional jazz singer. This Shirley Horn tribute has none of the dodgy song choices or show-off tendencies which compromised her otherwise impressive 2006 Australian performances. She is mastering that tricky artistic conundrum of playing to her strengths while simultaneously expanding her horizons. She is also learning that less is more; that a suggestion of an emotion left hanging in the air can be more telling than pile-driving it home to the listener.

The *If You Go* is a highlight, Martin’s dark voice lit by an aura of quiet desperation as she pleads her case with her lover, shaded by Gerard Presencer’s lonely flugelhorn. Even when she slides toward cocktail jazz, she oozes quality and charm.



Between The Lines|Knut Rossler/Johannes Vogt/Miroslav Vitous|ACT/Planet 9463-2

Seventeenth-century French lute music seems an unlikely bedmate for jazzy improvisation, yet here it is, made up with what soprano saxophonist Knut Rossler and lutenist Johannes Vogt rather charmingly call “paraphrases” of early pieces by Ennemond Gaultier, Denis Gaultier, Pierre Dubut, and Jacques Gallot. To these are annexed improvisations which are rarely directly based on the compositions, but are opportunities to extend the works beyond their almost perfect elegance. The beautiful melodies are kept chaste by the lute’s clean formality, and the improvising has another jewel in the crown besides Rossler’s ravishing forays on soprano and alto flute: brilliant bassist Miroslav Vitous is present on most pieces, and has never been better recorded. His instrument will shake the foundations of your home, even as the music rattles the flimsy wall between genres.