

THE WIRE 389 | JULY 2016

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Music From Beyond The Fringe
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Loren Connors | Idris Ackamoor & The Pyramids | The dawn of new age in Malibu | Beatrice Dillon

Loren Connors

The blues and the abstract truth

Idris Ackamoor & The Pyramids
The dawn of new age in Malibu
Beatrice Dillon

Group A
Peder Mannerfelt
Naama Tsabar
Alexander Tucker
Left Hand Path
Autechre

for release by ESP-Disk founder Bernard Stollman before his death last year – and, teamed here with two giants of US free jazz, he proves he's got the chops and the versatility to match. On flute, he sounds a windy, shakuhachi-like tone; on clarinet he veers from bent microtones to spry Dixieland flourishes; while his alto sax slides around the blue notes, more than once suggesting a cartoon Pink Panther insouciance. Piano and drums maintain a seething energy throughout, Shipp interrupting his own hints at harmonic structure with characteristically sudden low-end depth charges and Drake dancing in the brawny grip of an incessant polyrhythmic restlessness.

Ingrid Laubrock & Tom Rainey

Buoyancy

Relative Pitch CD

Any sax and drums duo requires a certain amount of connection if it's going to work, but few achieve the relaxed intimacy enjoyed by Laubrock and Rainey in this live set from 2014. Rainey begins the second track with the restrained rustle of brushes and something like the stiff crinkling of a sheet of paper, eliciting barely sounded overtones from Laubrock's soprano that lead into curiously churlish gurgles and quacks. On tenor, Laubrock sets out on trains of thought that flicker into fleeting fancies, startled propositions, logical conundrums and brief moments of lament, while Rainey – playing what sounds like a tiny compact kit – provides a constantly attentive, imaginatively sympathetic line of agreement and interrogation.

Radu Malfatti/Kevin Drumm/Lucio Capece

The Volume Surrounding The Task

Potlatch CD

Inasmuch as this 40 minute piece is characterised by its almost total lack of volume, responsibility for the titular task rests largely with the listener. There's a special kind of effort involved with staying focused on such a yawning absence of incident. Malfatti's trombone lets out long, muffled moans and airy huffs; Capece's bass clarinet swells into ghostly overtones so thin and transparent as to be hardly there at all; and Drumm's electronics suggest the possibility of microscopic chirrup and fizz almost undetectable by the naked ear. Long periods of quiet between each guarded gesture demand an almost Cageian attention to background detail, with the hum of studio electricity offering a supporting drone and the tiny sounds of keys and valves providing their own percussive commentary.

RED Trio & John Butcher

Summer Skyshift

Clean Feed CD

RED Trio's second album *Empire*, released in 2011, was a collaboration with Butcher, and they've continued to build a mutually stimulating rapport since. The young Portuguese piano trio specialise in a swift, swirling energy, with bassist Hernani Faustino and drummer Gabriel Ferrandini crashing and clamouring in a restless flux of implied tempi. It's enough to goad Butcher

into muscular territory, with his tenor hurling out pops, squeaks, blasts and brays – and even plateauing on the kind of flat growl John Coltrane developed around 1965. Freefalling down the other side of the peak, the four musicians settle into an extended shimmer, with pianist Rodrigo Pinheiro scampering skittishly while Butcher's soprano demonstrates an intensely maintained and held overtone technique, glinting in the light like a fresh scalpel blade.

Richard Scott's Lightning Ensemble & Jon Rose

Auslanders: Live In Berlin

Vernacular Recordings CD/ Sound Anatomy DL

Suppose you're stationed in a Burroughsian laboratory of advanced linguistic research and development, working on a programme designed to translate alien tongues into human languages. It just might sound a bit like this. Richard Scott's modular synthesizer whooshes and pings, tweets and twitters like a miniature robot sparrow; or it blurps and burbles like a fart in a mud bath. Philip Marks tumbles out a scattershot percussive mutter of muted patters and clacks. David Birchall, on acoustic guitar, teases taut filaments from the neck and flings out glancing, rapid strums. The first piece is 24 minutes of ceaseless, scrabbling activity, intoxicating in all its busy detail. For the 16 minute second piece, they're joined by violinist Jon Rose who adds tense pizzicato plucks and anxious swooning and sawing to a similar flurry of ideas. Early results from the lab suggest it's a big hit with dolphins.

Paul Taylor

Cusps

Jazz Sound CD

Beginning a solo piano album with a piece that sounds uncannily like the opening of Satie's *Gymnopédie No 1* has surely got to be asking for trouble. Even if you give Newcastle based pianist Taylor the benefit of the doubt and suggest that he's deliberately trying to recreate the maudlin mood of that much over-played composition, that doesn't excuse the rest of the album's meandering, middle of the road melancholy. A couple of shorter tracks attempt to strike more interesting ground, adding light and airy synth textures. But the whole thing ends up sounding like a CD called *Inoffensive Classics* composed by computer.

Cuong Vu Trio & Pat Metheny

Cuong Vu Trio Meets Pat Metheny

Nonesuch CD/DL

Vietnamese-American trumpeter Vu has played on Metheny's albums before but now the tables are turned, with Metheny adding electric guitar to Vu's trio alongside bassist Stomu Takeishi and drummer Ted Poor. Vu drives the whole session, swerving from a clear, distant call with subtle echo-delay to mellifluous lines and a pained rasp injected with growls and shrieks. Navigating rumbling toms and low bass moan, it's a decidedly darker region than Metheny's usual haunts, but he fits in, responding with muzzled feedback and vicious wasp buzz. The session burns brightest in the roaring free-bop of "Not Crazy (Just Giddy Upping)". □

Julian Cowley on a climate of suspicion, the illogic of dreams, and the spectre of the post-human

Matthew Collings

A Requiem For Edward Snowden

Magnetic North CD/DL/LP

Edinburgh based composer Matthew Collings conceived *A Requiem For Edward Snowden* as a live presentation with real-time visual processing by Jules Rawlinson. Detached from Rawlinson's image-stream, a hectic montage of everyday surveillance footage and violated cryptography, the music remains deeply unsettling. It necessarily has to be, given the *Requiem's* dedication to Snowden – whistleblower, apostate CIA employee, dead man walking in a radically compromised world. Violin, cello and clarinet form an edgy trio, their sorrowful tones often agitated to shrillness as they jostle for space among the rumble of interference and veils of electronic babble. The piece also eavesdrops on human voices, some compressed and digitised, others apparently bewildered or despairing. Collings successfully conveys a climate of anxiety and suspicion, in which rest and peace are not remotely on the agenda.

Francis Dhomont

Le Cri Du Choucas

Empreintes Digitales CD

Growing up in France during the Second World War, Francis Dhomont suffered an illness that robbed him permanently of his right eye and condemned him to months of total darkness. This biographical fact, and the need to learn to listen, surely underpins his devotion to acousmatic music. His scoreless electroacoustic compositions have prioritised sound itself without reference to any source, instrumental or otherwise. That period of enforced withdrawal from the external world may also have fuelled an interest in psychological states that surfaces in his *Cycle Des profondeurs (Cycle Of Depths)*, the third part of which is realised with *Le Cri Du Choucas*. The jackdaw cry of the title alludes cryptically to Franz Kafka in whose work the illogic of dreams and the authority of law often coincide. Dhomont reflects that sinister alliance of authority and the irrational. Sequences of French and German speech and voices distorted into abstraction are enfolded within eerie resonance and sonic shadows. As he approaches 90, Dhomont is still mapping

the collusion of hidden drives and open imperatives.

Dganit Elyakim

Failing Better

Aural Terrains CD

Israeli sound artist Dganit Elyakim is co-founder of Turing Dames, a new media ensemble who interrogate digital technology in terms of ethics and politics as well as aesthetics. The same questioning is pursued in her debut release *Failing Better*. Elyakim's compositions pitch acoustic against computerised instruments, physical against virtual performers, probing those tensions and quandaries that may give rise to the spectre of the post-human. Regardless of its critical or analytical potential, her music is immediate and punchy, a muscular tussle with algorithms, clenched and combative. These qualities are most evident on *Lewdness* and *Old Skool*, vocal pieces that tap into deep wells of prophetic utterance, not to mention text-sound composition. *Failing Better* ends with a recitation of the sucking stones sequence from Samuel Beckett's novel *Molloy* – a classic instance of permutational process embodied in personal quirk. As a postgraduate in The Hague, Elyakim studied with Martijn Padding, Gillius van Bergeijk and Clarence Barlow. If their influence is discernible in her music, it's in the articulate strength of the voice she has developed for herself.

Christian Mason

Unseen Light

Col Legno CD/DL

An orchestral starburst kick-starts *Clear Night*, the opening work on this collection. From that explosive moment the music invites you to track the fallout, follow trajectories, monitor further turbulence and listen out for change or recurrent events. Christian Mason knows how to unleash energy through compositional craft, galvanising the instrumental performance but also, crucially, sparking creative reception in an audience. *Learning Self-Modulation*, which starts as an assertive violin and piano duet steadily softens into a state of reflection, with Japanese gong-bowls chiming and the performers lending their singing voices to the sketching of a tenuous melody. On *The Years Of Light*, a soprano, a mezzo and the Klangforum Wien instrumentalists generate an otherworldly glow, flecked with wispy harmonica tones. For all its technical accomplishment Mason's music is designed to open up channels of imaginative response. *Isolarion* and *Layers Of Love* ring out with crescendos of applied know-how, suggesting unseen light rather than an obvious glare.

Åke Parmerud

Nécropolis

Empreintes Digitales CD

Versatile Swedish multimedia artist Åke Parmerud is co-founder of AudioTeckture, a company specialising in acoustic interior design for private and public environments. Refined and dynamic engagement with space is no less a feature of the four electroacoustic compositions