

GLOBE UNITY: BRAZIL



Piano Masters Series, Vol. 2
Philippe Baden Powell (Adventure Music)
Tempo (feat. Eddie Gomez) Tania Maria (Naïve)
Constelação Brazilian Trio (Motéma Music)
 by Tom Greenland

The world's fifth largest country, home of bossa nova, samba and birthplace of Tom Jobim, Airto Moreira, Milton Nascimento and Hermeto Pascoal (to name only a few), Brazil has deeply impacted jazz. Recent releases show that the impact continues.

Rio-raised Philippe Baden Powell (son of Baden Powell) is the second Brazilian pianist to go solo on the *Piano Masters Series*, recorded at Klavierhaus on a fabulous Fazioli grand, boasting a brassy, brawny bass register that vaults right out of the sounding box. On *Vol. 2*, Powell's touch is gentle, with deft ornamentation and intricate two-hand figures. After a short prelude and two minor-keyed ruminations, he hits his stride on "Round Midnight" with sprawling, hypnotic gestures. Other highlights are Egberto Gismonti's "Lôro", a funky samba recalling Keith Jarrett; "Canto Triste", lush with contrapuntal harmonies and textures; "Garfield", an elegant original that momentarily ventures off the beaten path; Coltrane's "Giant Steps", here in semi-modal guise; capped by "Ending", the most harmonically adventurous piece.

Pianist/vocalist Tania Maria, originally from northern Brazil, duets with bassist Eddie Gomez on *Tempo*, comfortable yet compelling, in-the-pocket but never predictable. Maria's voice runs hot and cool, scatting along to her solos on "Sentado a Beira do Caminho" (where she also whistles amazingly) or else caressing the Portuguese lyrics of "Estate", "Bronzes e Cristais", a beautiful bossa, and the title track. Tempos are subdued, but rhythmic energy never drops. Maria's originals are standouts: "Yeah Man", a boogie shuffle; "Senso Unica", which shifts between slow soul and spicy samba; "Dear Dee Dee", a tricky yet catchy line rivaling Chick Corea's "Spain", and "Tempo", featuring a rhapsodic opening, democratic repartee and surprise moments.

Pianist Helio Alves, bassist Nilson Matta, both from São Paulo, and drummer Duduka Da Fonseca, from Rio, are all New Yorkers now, known collectively as Brazilian Trio. *Constelação*, their second release, contains an original from each member, three infrequently played Jobim songs ("Quebra Pedra", "Luiza" and "O Boto"), Cedar Walton's "Bolivia" and a few bossa-jazz standards. The threesome plays fast and loose, testy but tasty, synched like a six-armed spider. Alves' "Bebe" fronts his fluid, filigreed style, broken chords punctuated by sudden exclamations. Da Fonseca trades dynamic choruses with bass and drums on "Embaló" and gently fleshes out the texture of "O Cantador". Matta's agile authority is evident throughout, notably on "LVM/Direto ao Assunto".

For more information, visit adventure-music.com, naive.fr and motema.com. Nilson Matta and Duduka Da Fonseca are at Dizzy's Club Sep. 1st-2nd (Brazil Day) and Jazz at Kitano Sep. 28th-29th. See Calendar.



Patience
Stéphane Kerecki/John Taylor (Zig-Zag Territoires)
All Strung Out
Denman Maroney/Dominic Lash (Kadima Collective)
Duetto Mark Dresser/Diane Moser (CIMP)
 by Sam Spokony

In these three albums, we find each piano/bass duo approaching the world of free improvisation with different modes of thought and intensity.

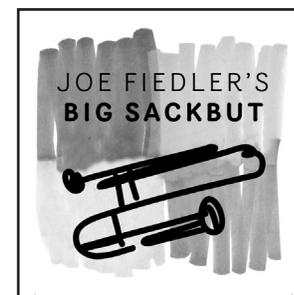
Patience, by French bassist Stéphane Kerecki and British pianist John Taylor, reveals the strong influence of the classic dynamic that once existed between pianist Bill Evans and bassist Scott LaFaro. After an improvised "Prologue" (followed later by a similar "Interlude" and, finally, an "Epilogue") the title track is darkly moody, but not tense, as Kerecki's basslines have room to breathe beneath Taylor's searching melodies. "Gary" follows in this same vein, introducing more particularly good interplay amidst the tune's swift motion. Taylor tends to display his virtuosity while maintaining a wonderfully light touch in the upper register, which is expertly balanced by Kerecki's spirited runs up and down the neck of his instrument. "La Source" opens with a beautifully bowed introduction from the bassist, the fluid, singing quality of which seems to epitomize much of what he aimed to accomplish with this session. The most successful track is the only composition not by Kerecki, LaFaro's "Jade Visions". Kerecki and Taylor combine their own voices with those of the past greats to provide a deep, introspective take on that beautiful tune.

After experiencing that aura, *All Strung Out* feels like a polar opposite. In nine improvisations, American pianist Denman Maroney and British bassist Dominic Lash release their energy in hectic, fast-paced bursts while also exploring the sonic limits of their instruments. Maroney utilizes his own "hyperpiano" technique, in which he strikes, plucks and bows the strings of the piano to create strikingly unusual tones. On "Air Wheel", he achieves a dry, acidic cymbal-like sound, as Lash follows with his own untraditional bowing. "Bowled Under" is wildly ambient, building slowly out of tinny scrapes and lightly jarring punches. Phrases are introduced and sometimes repeated, but are rarely developed very far beyond their basic stages. The layered scratches and metallic screams that swell in "Case in Area" remind one, alternately, of a jet engine and a frantic ensemble of violinists. It is intriguing and impressive that Maroney can even express these tones fluently - not to mention discovering them in the first place - but they do not always inspire much in the way of emotion.

While the first two albums in this group are constructed within two opposing atmospheres, *Duetto* displays ranges of dynamics and insight that are wide enough to span across both ends of that spectrum. Pianist Diane Moser and bassist Mark Dresser, who both contributed compositions to the effort, have the strongest and most affecting album of this group - not because they display more skill, but simply because their free jazz explorations are, well, freer. From the first track, Moser's tune "Hello", both players exude a boundless feeling of self-expression that reveals itself in every note they play. What results is a very rare balance of wildly atonal improvisation and consonant harmonic lushness - one that is born of arrangements, but is truly spontaneous in its development and

execution. Added inventiveness is found on Dresser's composition "Yeller Grace", which blends "Yellow Rose of Texas", "Amazing Grace" and the National Anthem into a barely recognizable yet fully engaging mix. And they show plenty of versatility, as piano and bass converse equally well within the sweeping, legato passages of "For My Mother" or the jarring, playful bounces of "Big Mama". But the true highlight is their interplay on Dresser's composition "Mattress on a Stick", which leads with a breathtakingly lyrical bass introduction, over Moser's sparse and haunting choice of chords. Each tune was recorded straight to two entirely clean, un-mixed tracks, the depth of the tones astounding, providing a truly intimate experience.

For more information, visit outhere-music.com/zigzag, kadimacollective.com and cimprecords.com. Moser and Dresser are at Cornelia Street Café Sep. 6th. See Calendar.



Big Sackbut
Joe Fiedler (Yellow Sound)
 by Kurt Gottschalk

Big Sackbut was born as an idea some 25 years ago although it only emerged in the physical realm in the past couple of years. The genesis came when Joe Fiedler first saw the World Saxophone Quartet (WSQ) and wanted to devise a similar setting for his trombone. But there's another landmark avant-bop band of the '80s that seems at least as much a forebear. It's not just the instrumentation that invites parallels with Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, it's the music and in the spirit it invokes. WSQ aimed at being as huge as possible, both in sound and in the conquistadorial cultural aspirations its name implied, whereas Bowie already had a world takeover ensemble (even if it modestly only geographically namechecked Chicago). His Brass Fantasy (coming along a half-dozen or so years after the WSQ) only sought to prove that the horn section was self-sufficient. It wasn't that they could sound like a whole band, just that they could sound like all you needed. It was about - deeply about - the love of a horn and the love of music, all music.

Likewise, Big Sackbut is a defiantly naked horn section. And just as Bowie fished in diverse musical ponds, Fiedler has arranged Captain Beefheart, Willie Colon and Sun Ra for the first album by his trombone-trio-plus-tuba group, as well as penning some new tunes and rearranging a couple from past projects. The diversity is no surprise; Fiedler's work has ranged from playing with Celia Cruz and Wyclif Jean to Anthony Braxton and Cecil Taylor. But the range of styles makes for a roundly enjoyable record. (But let us also remember Sun Ra's traditionalism and Willie Colon's experimentalism before over-enthusiasing about radical programming.) Fiedler is a smart arranger, guaranteeing a nice fluidity to the set and his band - Ryan Keberle, Josh Roseman and Marcus Rojas - breathe warm life into the music. His own compositions hold the album together, something called "Ging Gong" being an especially sweet surprise.

All of that said, then, in what chair does Big Sackbut sit? It is certainly in the tradition that the late Bowie liked to term "serious fun". (Might we say "out for a good time?") It is not experimental but it is inventive. Perhaps best put simply, it's a job well done.

For more information, visit yellowsoundlabel.com. This project is at The Jazz Gallery Sep. 8th. See Calendar.