

GLOBE UNITY:GERMANY



Book of Family Affairs

Patrick Bebelaar/Herbert Joos/Gunter Lenz (HGBS)

Into the Mackerel Sky

Axel Schlosser & hr-Bigband (Double Moon)

Eponymous

The Alliteration (Creative Sources)

by Tom Greenland

Since the mid '20s, Germany, particularly Berlin, has been an important jazz hub, the Vaterland to a host of seminal artists, labels, festivals and experimentation. Three recent releases give a sample of Deutsch jazz and its trumpeters.

Book of Family Affairs is a trio effort by pianist Patrick Bebelaar, trumpeter Herbert Joos and bassist Günter Lenz, showcasing their songwriting talents and spontaneous repartee. Although all thrive in free musical environments, here the emphasis is on melody and form, with strong writing by each. The combination of breathy muted trumpet, which recalls the tender romanticism of Miles Davis, and churchy piano (in the sense of both Bach and Abdullah Ibrahim) gives these melodies emotional intimacy and honesty. Joos' "Song for Thelonius" [sic] has catchy additive phrases like Monk's "Straight, No Chaser"; Bebelaar's "Tango" sounds like a naughty lounge band trying to slip one over on the crowd; and Lenz' "Requiem for W.W." creates a disjointed, existential atmosphere, pierced by cool but poignant trumpet, the cry of a human voice.

Into the Mackerel Sky is a showcase for the considerable talents of trumpeter Axel Schlosser, principal soloist, composer, arranger and conductor on the date, which captures the hr-Bigband live on consecutive gigs. Impeccably recorded and mixed, with clear separation between the 17 musicians and played with precision and finesse, the album has many of the traditional textures and figures one might expect from a big band, but Schlosser reveals his originality on "Seher und Gesehene" in the alternation of instrumental colors, use of jagged cross-rhythms and carnivalistic interlude; or in his Thad Jones-like soli and tutti sections in "Dewayne's Brain". Among the solos, Schlosser's bright flugelhorn on "The Dark Hours" and his growling tone on "Nocturnal Potter Lane", Heinz-Dieter Sauerborn's sweet soprano saxophone on "Seher und Gesehene" and Steffen Weber's ebullient tenor saxophone on "On the Vee Bee" are standouts.

The Alliteration is the eponymous debut from a septet of trumpeter Nikolaus Neuser, soprano saxophonist Manuel Mieth, clarinetist Floros Floridis, trombonist Gerhard Gschlößl, pianist Antonis Anissegos, bassist Akira Ando and drummer Maurice de Martin. The suite of improvisations with alliterative titles sounds like a futuristic vision of traditional New Orleans jazz: an unruly mix of animalian voices raised in harmonious dissonance, or perhaps what it might have sounded like at daybreak on Noah's ark. Each track unravels seemingly spontaneously, but there is order to the chaos, as if the climaxes were cued or the various pairings (trumpet and trombone, soprano and clarinet) were preplanned, creating a blend of cohesive lyricism and anarchical noise. The seven selections are of a piece, with especially compelling moments on "Equal Equals Equal" and "Fertile Fossils".

For more information, visit hgbs.de, challengerecords.com and creativesourcesrec.com



Live in Paris

Miles Davis (Frémeaux & Associés)

by Anders Griffen

The Miles Davis European tours of 1960 have been widely discussed and debated by musicians and fans alike. John Coltrane is the primary subject for most of it as he bursts forth with revolutionary music. Writing for the *France-Observateur*, Charles Estienne likened the performances to the reception of Stravinsky's "Le Sacre du Printemps". Recorded for radio or bootlegged, recordings from these tours have been issued over the years by several imprints, including *Miles Davis in Stockholm 1960 Complete* (Dragon) and *All of You: The Last Tour* (Acrobat). The music on this new release was professionally recorded and has been previously issued on *Miles Davis En Concert Avec Europe1* (Trema) and, in part, on *Miles Davis featuring John Coltrane: Olympia-Mar 20, 1960* (Delta), on which the date is incorrect; the first night of the tour took place on Monday, Mar. 21st, 1960.

Miles was outspoken about continuous development and change and is a great example of an artist realizing this mission. In this moment, captured on these recordings, he met his match. One year after *Kind of Blue* was recorded and ten months after the recording of Coltrane's *Giant Steps*, Coltrane had tendered his resignation, as reported by the *Philadelphia Tribune* on Mar. 15th and *DownBeat* on the 17th and was already moving on. Somehow Miles compelled the reluctant saxophonist to make the tour. "He decided to go with us," Miles states in his autobiography, "but he grumped and complained and sat by himself all the time we were over there." It was his first trip to Europe and Coltrane's performance is legendary on these dates. He was undergoing a rapid process of discovery, characterized by an obsession with harmony. While the jazz world was still beginning to deal with *Giant Steps*, it was already behind him. Trane was now free to explore harmonic relationships on any tune in the band's set. This new vocabulary, including multiphonics, rapid-fire arpeggios and diminished sequences, is heard throughout. He embarks on his solos with simple enough themes and develops them until torrential "sheets of sound" fly with conviction. The open form of "So What" is the best vehicle for his flights, but he has his way with the blues on "Walkin'" and, around the 2:10 mark on "Oleo", one can hear the opening theme of "A Love Supreme". Many concertgoers did not like what they heard and boos are mixed with cheers during his solos, particularly on "Walkin'" and "Bye Bye Blackbird". It was shocking then and listeners today can still hear it given the stark contrast between his solos and the rhythm section of Wynton Kelly (piano), Paul Chambers (bass) and Jimmy Cobb (drums).

The latter trio sounds fantastic throughout and the audience cheers loudly for them, but they may be slightly more in their element when the band returned to Europe in October and Sonny Stitt took the saxophone chair. They reach back and play in a bop mode that pre-dates *Kind of Blue* and add tunes like "Autumn Leaves", "If I Were A Bell" and "Two Bass Hit". An "unidentified" tune credited to Stitt is a 12-bar blues in the odd key of Db; perhaps that's why the saxophonist is the only soloist. This is a great performance in well-known territory and the crowd goes wild.

Miles Davis Live in Paris makes these legendary

concerts available again and is enjoyable to a crowd of fans. It's exciting to witness how challenging the Coltrane performances were for the audience in attendance. Folks that prefer pre-Impulse Coltrane can best appreciate his break from the familiar vocabulary while hearing him backed by this straightahead rhythm section. Meanwhile, for the listeners who insist on a soloist with more of a straightahead rapport with the rhythm section, the sets with Stitt are burning! Miles sounds every bit as genuine in these very different settings, pushing the envelope behind Trane and swinging hard alongside Stitt.

For more information, visit fremeaux.com. A Miles Davis tribute is at *Smoke May 22nd-24th*. See Calendar.



#imsoneworleans

Kermit Ruffins & The Barbecue Swingers
(Basin Street)

by Alex Henderson

Kermit Ruffins has never been a purist when it comes to New Orleans jazz. Although Dixieland and New Orleans swing have been an important part of his output, the trumpeter/singer has also been mindful of the Crescent City's sizeable contributions to everything from soul, funk, rock 'n' roll and the blues to brass bands. And that broad-minded outlook is very much at work on #imsoneworleans. The album is fairly unpredictable but, whether leaning in the direction of jazz, funk, soul or the blues, Ruffins always maintains a strong New Orleans flavor.

Ruffins, now 50, fondly recalls Louis Armstrong's classic performances of Tin Pan Alley standards on Jimmy McHugh-Dorothy Fields' "I Can't Give You Anything But Love", Harry Warren's "At Last" (featuring singer Nayo Jones) and Harold Arlen's "Somewhere Over the Rainbow". Ruffins moves into R&B and rock 'n' roll territory on Professor Longhair's "Tipitina" and the James "Sugar Boy" Crawford standard "Iko Iko" while the funky "Put Your Right Foot Forward" (which Ruffins co-wrote) is not unlike something The Meters (one of New Orleans' great funk/soul bands) recorded in the '70s.

New Orleans—with its mixture of African, Latin and French influences—has long been famous for its multiculturalism. And on "Mexican Special" (a tune Ruffins co-wrote and previously recorded when he was with the Rebirth Brass Band), one hears a strong AfroCaribbean flavor enhanced by guest Dexter Daily's steel drums. All of the sidemen on this CD do their part to help Ruffins maintain a Crescent City sound, including members of his working band The Barbecue Swingers (bassist Kevin Morris, pianist/keyboard player Yoshitaka "Z2" Tsuji and drummer Jerry Barbarin Anderson) and guests like trombonist Haruka Kikuchi, guitarist June Yamagishi and percussionist Percy Williams.

Ruffins' playful title track is a celebration of New Orleans music in general. Mentioning everyone from Armstrong to Longhair to Fats Domino during the course of the song, Ruffins reminds listeners how many influential musicians have come from his hometown over the years. Some jazz purists may prefer that Ruffins stick to straightahead New Orleans jazz, but creatively he would be selling himself short.

For more information, visit basinstreetrecords.com. This band is at *Brooklyn Bowl May 29th*. See Calendar.