

Organique
Rich Perry (SteepleChase)
 by Anders Griffen

This is Rich Perry's 22nd album as a leader with SteepleChase since 1993, an organ trio with Gary Versace (Hammond B3) and Jeff Hirshfield (drums). With a complement of tools and experience, Perry contrasts melody, harmony and rhythm with dynamics and space and is among the finest saxophone soloists in the world today. Including Versace's SteepleChase debut, *Time And Again* (2005), this is Perry's second organ record. Versace is spectacular, combining virtuosity with a sometimes-mischievous bent that engrosses his listeners and bandmates alike. Overall, this is an even-tempered and cool record date.

Four out of the six cuts on this disc were composed by jazz piano masters, the other two by composers of musicals. The listener is drawn in from the outset as the group establishes its own scene. The program opens with Herbie Hancock's "Toys", which premiered on *Speak Like a Child* and has rarely been heard outside of Hancock's bands. Richard Rodgers-Lorenz Hart's "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" follows in a cool rendition. John Lewis' "Afternoon In Paris" brightens the mood, featuring a two and four accent at the end of the A sections and a lively outro. "Thad's Pad" (Hank Jones) is Perry's best individual outing, another good example of his shifting gears to contrast solo ideas.

The tone of the organ imbues this nicely recorded album. As is often the case, the drums are mixed somewhat quieter than its partners; Hirshfield plays at an easy dynamic anyway and his adventurous moments don't upset the casual listener but can spark the curiosity of the intent ear. Likewise, the album could set a fine background vibe, but the music rewards the engaged listener and benefits from repeated plays. On a great, cooperative date, Versace stands out and is often the spark. Perry is not reserved, but seems to go about his business quietly. "I don't necessarily want to be a leader," he says in the liner notes, "and not everyone wants to be in the spotlight."

For more information, visit steeplechase.dk. Perry is at *Jazz Standard* Nov. 24th-29th with Maria Schneider, *Cornelia Street Café* Nov. 30th with Michael Blanco and *Village Vanguard Mondays* with Vanguard Orchestra. See *Calendar and Regular Engagements*.



Too Marvelous For Words
Beegie Adair/Don Aliquo (Adair Music Group)
 by Marcia Hillman

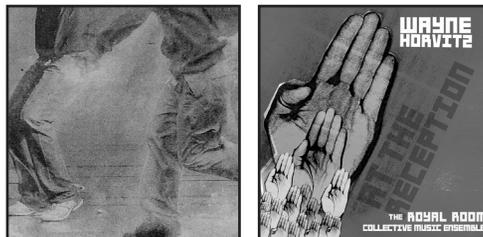
Pianist Beegie Adair and saxophonist Don Aliquo have produced an intimate, well-paced and excellently recorded album with, as Adair states in the liner notes, "vintage, mid-fifties bebop feel", akin to a perfectly put-together live set heard at a club. Joining them are bassist Roger Spencer and drummer Chris Brown (who completes Adair's regular trio and with whom Aliquo

has performed many times) for material from the Great American and jazz songbooks.

Aliquo has a rich warm sound, which enhances the slower tracks, and the ability for breathtaking runs on uptempo items like Billy Strayhorn's "Isfahan" and Arthur Altman-Jack Lawrence's "All Or Nothing At All". Adair is a master at the piano, delivering interesting solos easily (Strayhorn-Ellington's "Day Dream" and Richard Rodgers-Lorenz Hart's "This Can't Be Love", for example) and accompanying Aliquo with the appropriate amount of needed fills behind him. There is also that magical musical connection between the two as they follow each other's solos as if of one mind. That same connection extends to the rest of the group. Brown and Spencer contribute solid performances all the way through, the latter delivering an inspired statement on George Fragos-Jack Baker-Dick Gasparre's "I Hear A Rhapsody".

The tracks follow typical arrangements—piano or saxophone stating the melody, the two taking their solos, trading fours with drums on some tracks (e.g. "This Can't Be Love" and Strayhorn's "Johnny Come Lately"). What is unusual is the way the album has been mixed. Every instrument is out front so that you can hear each fully. This makes it possible to appreciate Brown's excellent brushwork on Tadd Dameron's killer torch song "If You Could See Me Now" and Rodgers-Hart's "It Never Entered My Mind", the latter providing a soft, sensitive close to the album.

For more information, visit beegieadair.com. Adair is at *Saint Peter's* Nov. 25th. See *Calendar*.



55: Music and Dance In Concrete
Wayne Horvitz (Other Room Music)
At The Reception
Wayne Horvitz and The Royal Room Collective
Music Ensemble (Songlines)
 by Ken Waxman

Wayne Horvitz' most recent recorded works show how far he has progressed since his days as a Lower East Side enfant terrible keyboardist. In Seattle since the late '80s, Horvitz now works regularly with chamber groups and dance companies, crafting scores that mix more settled themes with rational improvisations. These two sessions are decidedly utilitarian, yet function so as to create notable sounds as they solve the challenges put in front of the composer.

55: Music and Dance in Concrete is made up of sequences composed for a modular, site-specific work in Port Townsend, Wash., meant to be performed alongside the choreography of Yukio Suzuki plus images from video artist Yohei Saito. The sequences preserved on this LP are merely one variant of the score Horvitz composed for the dance performance.

Utilizing the existing architecture of Fort Worden, including its concrete bunkers and massive cistern, the four dancers in Suzuki's troupe interpret some of Horvitz' sequences, which altogether includes 55 chamber music-like compositions and 55 improvisations. The 13 tracks here generally emphasize the close harmony existing between the five horn players and four string players with Maria Mannisto's supple wordless vocals coloring or commenting on instrumental motifs.

Despite the presence of experienced improvisers like alto saxophonist Briggan Krauss and violist Eyvind Kang, a soundtrack-like blandness seems to predominate. Only certain segments are musically more sophisticated; for instance, the speedy and violent

"55 (15)" balances horn lowing and tremolo string shimmers while a raucous repetitive wake-up call propelled by staccato brass blats on "55(3)" is similarly powerful. Meanwhile, a near-impressionistic clarinet line coupled with distant voice and string echoes on "55 (5)" creates an atmospheric theme, which fits a glimpse of the structure's dark crevices. Only when coupled with the dancers' fluid movements—view parts of the performance at 55musicanddance.wordpress.com—does the juxtaposition invest some of the music with more vibrant properties.

At *The Reception*, on the other hand, is Horvitz' individualized adaptation of conduction (use of hand signals and other cues to push musicians towards maximum spontaneity) pioneered by the late Butch Morris, in that the 13 directed improvisations grow out of Horvitz' compositions. Almost 75 minutes of music divided into two sets, Horvitz' venture into conduction is designed to open up the tunes' structure, giving the 14-member Royal Room Collective Music Ensemble more freedom to improvise.

Like the above album, which involves some of the same musicians, the concept is only partially realized. Perhaps the clean air and open spaces of Washington State inured the players from urban tension, but at points the interpretations appear too perfect and lacking spontaneity. Every timbre and every voicing sounds locked-in, as if the ensemble is reading a score. Perhaps this demonstrates Horvitz' grasp of Morris' strategy to do away with jarring transitions from notated to improvised sequences. But this overly cautious approach almost negates any potential for musical free-falling, the thrilling tightrope-walking-without-a-net that the composer experienced playing in Morris' groups. There are immaculate thematic elaborations by some soloists, but where are grittiness and passion that could make the tracks so much more?

That said there's merit and even profundity in some tracks. Built on a shuffle beat, "A Walk in the Rain" opens the program on a buoyant note and, especially when tenor saxophonist Skerik is playing, becomes an unabashed swinger. "Barber Shop" and faster-paced "Disingenuous Firefight" bubble along with jaunty jollity reminiscent of other little big bands like the ICP Orchestra. There are three compositions that spectacularly realize Horvitz' aims: "First Light" progressively blends mellow chords with incremental saxophone swelling; "Sweeter than the Day" has sugary trombone timbres modifying sour reed bites; and "Prepaid Funeral" offers an Ellington-like sophistication, the gradually unreeling theme maintaining its taut pulse as brief, dissonant solos successively challenge the narrative.

For more information, visit waynehorvitz.net and songlines.com. Horvitz is at *Roulette* Nov. 27th-28th. See *Calendar*.

UTAZATA

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