

Slim's Spins

A monthly column of independent observations by Slim, whose lifelong work in the world of Jazz/Improvised music has given her an astoundingly broad knowledge of and critical acuity into its recorded artifacts as well as her fabled encyclopedic reference of its practitioners and matrix. For disclosure, it should be noted that Slim has a corporate affiliation with Cadence/CIMP along with a lifelong affiliation with her integrity.

It's 6 o'clock on a Friday evening after a long week of 9 to 5. Don't despair when, after checking your local listings, you see that once again your favorite musicians will not be coming to a theatre near you. This means an opportunity to be your own musical programmer. There are some requirements: duo recordings only and no vocals. While solo recordings, by nature, are introspective, the intimacy two musicians can create makes for an intense listening experience. The duos discussed below are probably atypical of what initially comes to mind if someone were to say he or she was looking for a good duo recording to listen to. Of course, *Cadence* readers are anything but typical, and it is Friday night and time to blow off steam, so *polite* is not on the menu.

6 p.m.: The warm-up: **BJÖRKENHEIM & LIGETI, SHADOWGLOW** (TUM 6). Together guitarist Raoul Björkenheim and drummer Lukas Ligeti carefully pace their way through a dozen improvisations best (but not pejoratively) described as Avant Noise. Björkenheim has an impressive list of credits, most notable being a member of Edward Vesala's Sound and Fury ensemble. His playing, at its most outside and most *coherent*, falls between Derek Bailey and early Bill Frisell. Ligeti's endlessly creative drumming provides a structure for Björkenheim into which he can interject ambient sounds in this flowing musical conversation. The flow is key to what makes this recording so enjoyable. The two are careful not to linger long after they make their way to a catchy phrase, allowing the listener room for some imaginative interaction.

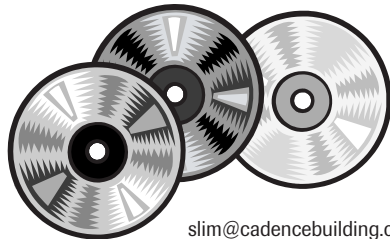
7:15 p.m. (allowing time to make a pit stop, perhaps grab a beer, but not to check email!): Take your pick between **ACHIM JAROSCHEK & PETER BROTZMANN, SUBTLE TWISTER** (konnex 5093) or their other duo recording, **NEUROTRANSMITTER** (Double Moon 1006).

Peter Brotzmann rarely records with pianists, let alone with only a pianist, making his pairing with Achim Jaroschek on these two recordings notable, at the very least. One of Brotzmann's pluses is his

intense playing. One of Brotzmann's minuses is his intense playing! Particularly when he starts at extreme intensity right out of the gate: no stretching, no warm-up, just straight into overdrive. I enjoy his playing most when there is a musical delineation between beginning, middle, and end, and the intensity waxes and wanes accordingly. Jaroschek, as could be surmised from this pairing, figures in on the Cecil Taylor—as opposed to the Hank Jones—end of the dial. The “quieter” recording of the two is *Neurotransmitter*. Oddly, it opens with “Brain Change,” a couple minutes of a drum machine and synth duo that seems completely out of place, and its inclusion as well as choice for opening track is perplexing. The other two tracks—one original apiece—are what make this a worthwhile recording. This recording is intense in its subtleness. Ironically, *Subtle Twister* is the more dynamic recording of the two. The subtle part is quite a stretch as, even in its least intense moments, it still has about as much subtlety as a charging bull! Jaroschek's playing is more dynamic and more dense here and Brotzmann is on full throttle. Depending upon one's proclivities, I'd choose *Neurotransmitter* for introspection and *Subtle Twister* for intensity. Definitely different from one another—not just more of the same.

Later this same evening: **JIM PEPPER & MAL WALDRON, THE ART OF THE DUO** (Tutu 888106). Neither Waldron nor Pepper needs an introduction, but to be reminded of their existence never hurts. This album is a perfect blend: two players playing half standards and half originals from the heart and head (arguably one and the same). It is particularly therapeutic late at night. I find myself going back to this recording often. Fans of the Archie Shepp-Horace Parlan pairings should check this out.

Other favorites: **ABDULLAH IBRAHIM & JOHNNY DYANI, ECHOES OF AFRICA** (RIVER 3047); **DAVID MURRAY & JON JANG, RIVER OF LIFE** (Asian Improv 62); **PAUL BLEY & GARY PEACOCK, MINDSET** (SoulNote 121213).



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