

# NEW ISSUES

## 1) TIM LAPHORN SEVENTH SENSE

BASHO 19

*BRIGHT MISSISSIPPI / SEVENTH SENSE / COME RAIN OR COME SHINE / THE BARK AND THE BITE / SKYLARK / LAURIE / WALKING WOUNDED / IF I SHOULD LOSE YOU / I'M IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE.* 60:15

Laphorn, p; Arnie Somogyi, b;  
Stephen Keogh, d. 11/25/05,  
London, England

## 2) ULI LENZ GOOD-BYE VENUS

TUTU 888218

*GOOD-BYE VENUS / COSMIC BERLIN / WHEN SUNNY GETS BLUE / WELL, YOU NEEDN'T / TUNE ME UP, BABY / ARCO ORBIT IN D MINOR / PLANET 7UP / DON'T ASK ME NOW / WHY CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG / MOON DUCKS / GODZILLA TROPICANA.* 68:00

Lenz, p; Ed Schuller, b;  
John Betsch, d.  
3/14-15/06, Berlin, Germany

## 3) MICHELE DI TORO IL PASSO DEL GATTO

ABEAT 45

*CHORALE I / L'ISTANTE PERDUTO / ULTIMO GIORNO IN VIA PALAZZI / REYNOLD'S LAW / THE NIGHT GONE BY / ODD NOTES SUITE / IL PASSO DEL GATTO /*

The percentage of pedestrian piano trios is pretty high these days. Londoner Tim Laphorn tries to beat the odds on (1) and while the outcome of his gamble isn't an unqualified success, there's still plenty to consider over the course of the program. The aim, as stated in the disc's brief notes, was to approach the nine inning songbook with as little premeditation as possible. Nearly all of the tracks are first takes and they wear the occasional minor mistake proudly. Laphorn brings a bit of rolling funk to Monk's "Bright Mississippi." His touch is clean and decisive, but a tad busy and there's little of the composer's spaciousness left in the piece. "Seventh Sense" slows things down considerably on the back of an ambling bass ostinato. Somogy's sound on the strings is fat and capacious, blending well with the steady swish of Keogh's brushes. Laphorn shapes crisp chords against the pliant backdrop, and works the pedals for a wash of swirling sustain mid-piece. "The Bark and the Bite" brings the tempo back up to a bustling clip, Laphorn's hands locking in tight agreement as his colleagues ramp up the rhythmic tension around him. Release arrives in a cascade of galloping runs that give off a slight air of ostentation and the accompanying Jarrett-style vocalese certainly doesn't help, but the concentrated velocity is hard to fault, especially since it leads into a roiling drum sortie form Keogh. Bill Evans, an obvious influence but far from an objectionable one, receives a nod with the elegant renderings of the ballads "Skylark" and "Laurie." On the first tune Keogh is back on brushes and Somogy keeps his contributions to a plush throb. Laphorn comes at the tune from an angle of suitable respect, limning the theme before heading out for an extended round of improvisatory variations. The second piece is even more opulent but gains a little edge from Keogh's switch to sticks. "Walking Wounded" takes wing on an aggressive bass vamp, but again the three don't let much in the way of dissonance, maintaining an overarching decorum even when flexing their collective muscles. Two familiar standards in the final innings bring back thoughts of Evans. In sum, it's a decent date, but not an especially memorable one.

Considerable cajones are necessary to record with Mal Waldron's former rhythm partners on his former label in a trio setting. German pianist Lenz appears to have a pair and the virile sweaty studio date captured on (2) is incontrovertible evidence. Schuller and Betsch have made their careers building burly and versatile accompaniment for some of the heaviest hitters in creative Jazz. They accord Lenz the same token, striking hard, but supportively from the opening "Good-Bye Venus" with rapport that runs deep and reliable. Together they tug at the tune's underlying beat and uncover some slinky swing for the effort. Lenz adds some pedal-colored patterns against a strong bass snap and sharply cast downbeat that could seemingly punch holes in concrete. The instru-

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RETURNING / REMOTE WHISPER  
/ INNER SIDES\*. 60/30

Di Toro, p; Yuri Goloubev, b;  
Marco Zanoli, d;  
Piergiorgio Miotto, tbn\*.  
Location not given, 10/05



David Haney by Ken Weiss

ments are miked close and recorded hot. It's a case of almost too close when it comes to Betsch, who has one of the strongest stick strokes around and probably goes through drumheads with regularity. Eight more originals and two standards follow with ensemble energy rarely flagging. "Cosmic Berlin" riffs on a calypso rhythm; Schuller's bass bobbing against Lenz's sharply syncopated block chords before breaking ranks for an athletic solo laced with wordless vocal commentary. "When Sunny Gets Blue" plays like a ballad in overall feel, but in irreverent Jaki Byard style with lots of pronged corners and boisterous asides that shatter any sense of bookish repertory. Schuller's bow work blends poise and plangency on the brief classically-colored solo "Arco Orbit in D Minor." It's an example of odd bedfellows echoed in pizzicato on the pummeling rundown of Monk's "Well, You Needn't" and an unaccompanied preamble to "Planet 7up," a Latin-laced stomper that puts the concert piano through another punishing set of paces. The remainder of the program strides along in similar ruddy, perspiration-heavy fashion, confident and brimming with channeled testosterone starting with the declarative and suggestive standard variation, "Tune Me Up, Baby." One listener's galvanizing brio is another person's abrasive bombast. This trio will almost certainly offend members of the latter camp while bringing those in the former unmitigated pleasure. Wherever one stands on that arbitrary continuum, there's little denying the powder keg force with which these three ply their trade.

Italian pianist Michele Di Toro carries conservatory-bred credentials, a pedigree that is both a plus and minus to the music on (3). Awards and commendations appear to be plentiful occupants of his mantle and an overlapping genteel interest in classical and Jazz forms informs the ten tracks of this studio recital. Technique and poise preside in abundance, recalling the ECM stable of keyboardists in lucid melodic focus and near impeccable touch. The downside comes with the general feeling of overt safety built into his improvisations and designs. One piece folds into the next with predictable crests and troughs and that partial interchangeability opens a dangerous path to listener complacency. The studio sound is pristine, but also slightly antiseptic in its rendering of the instruments. Colleagues Goloubev and Zanoli keep easy pace with their employer's telegraphed choices, rising to the bait when circumstances call for their own statements in the foreground. The three players escape the confining stylistic cocoon on the "Odd Notes Suite," a six part piece that feels more egalitarian in structure and is made better for it. First Zanoli and then Goloubev solo with vigor and the variety helps substantially in priming the ear for the pianist's eventual entrance. Di Toro also sounds galvanized by the deviation and the finale contains a welcome amount of rhythmic