



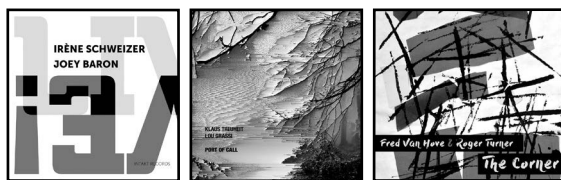
Witches Butter
Tree Ear (Clean Feed)
by Stuart Broomer

Percussionist Gerry Hemingway has covered tremendous musical ground in his career, from the Anthony Braxton Quartet, through his own distinguished groups and the BassDrumBone trio to wide-ranging duos with saxophonists John Butcher and Ellery Eskelin, synthesizer player Thomas Lehn, guitarist Terrence McManus, pianist Marilyn Crispell and Korean komungo virtuoso Jin Hi Kim. Tree Ear, a collective trio formed in 2013, introduces two stellar Swiss musicians 30 years Hemingway's junior, Sebastian Strinning on tenor saxophone and bass clarinet and guitarist Manuel Troller.

Tree Ear is devoted to collective improvisation and clearly open to multiple directions. There's a definite aesthetic of risk operative here. It manifests itself playfully in the Wild-West-saloon-poker-game photo shoot for the cover and conditions the band name and the track titles. Tree Ear and "Witches Butter" are fungi, edible apparently; most titles are drawn from poker parlance, though "Kill Button" and "Drag Light" might be shared with racing. "Range of Hands" starts the proceedings with a sudden tremolo suggesting a Bernard Herrmann score but which opts for continuous sustained sounds from tenor and guitar with Hemingway building tension from within. The understated "Third Man Walking" emphasizes the moody lower register of bass clarinet and the almost telepathic subtlety of Troller and Hemingway, all three gradually expanding the piece by adding different dimensions and materials.

If the initial pieces suggest levels of discretion worthy of AMM or Jimmy Giuffre, the title track unleashes a firestorm of screaming tenor, insistent distorted guitar and driving drums, locating the trio in an altogether different orbit. Improvisation, like mushrooms and poker, involves discretion as well and the members of Tree Ear are masters of restraint. As good as the early episodes of the program are, they pale before what's up the group's proverbial and collective sleeves, finally unleashing their reserves of intensity and invention in the mysterious click dialogue of "Kill Button" and dense, driving "Reraise", its power-tool guitar electronics contributing to energy music of the first order.

For more information, visit cleanfeed-records.com. Gerry Hemingway is at The DiMenna Center Dec. 16th with Sarah Weaver. See Calendar.



Live!
Irène Schweizer/Joey Baron (Intakt)
Port of Call
Klaus Treuheit/Lou Grassi (NoBusiness)
The Corner
Fred Van Hove/Roger Turner (Relative Pitch)
by Mark Keresman

If the concept of a pianist and drummer interacting without those meddling bassists (kidding) intrigues, there are these three recent sets in the marketplace.

Swiss pianist Irène Schweizer has carved out a

niche playing and recording with notable cutting-edge drummers. American Joey Baron is a flexible drummer, one equally at home with standard piano trios as with John Zorn's various ensembles. Schweizer's "Free for All" opens *Live!*, the pianist peeling off rolling, slightly dramatic chords with hints of stride, Baron laying down a subtle barrage of rolls and rumbles. Baron's "Up the Ladder" features Schweizer playing cyclic, baroque-like sounds and his rat-a-tat crackle before coming down to Earth. "String Fever" is a mystery unfolding with the duo engaging in some extended techniques; it evolves organically from the abstract to the cinematic, Schweizer in an impish and melodious mode, her usually volcanic free-er side muted by Baron's empathic, at times impressionistic, at others quick-tempered percussion.

Port of Call is a studio-recorded duet by Klaus Treuheit and Lou Grassi. The latter is an American drummer who runs the gamut of ragtime (Max Morath) to no time (Gunter Hampel, Burton Greene). Treuheit is a German pianist who studied under Herbie Hancock and modern classical composer George Crumb. Mostly co-composed, this Port takes in the elemental blues, as on "Mysterioso IV". This series of duos has a somewhat free-ish conversational cast, especially in "L'Space Sonore", while "Lament #PB III" is wry, spiky bebop, Grassi swinging like Max Roach, Treuheit like Bud Powell. While heavy on mostly cerebral free/out playing, both apply a harmonious touch throughout and bits of swing when perhaps least expected.

Belgian pianist Fred Van Hove is one of the granddaddies of the '60s European free jazz scene. Roger Turner is a British drummer who in the mid- and late '70s became recognized in the UK avant garde jazz scene. *The Corner* was recorded live at Café Oto, an east London music venue, and Van Hove and Turner really go to town on four lengthy free-improvised pieces. There is a constant flurry of forward-moving energy here and episodes of calm between storms, via brief stretches of pliable lyricism from Van Hove. There's an inner logic, an overall mood of bracing, good-humored catharsis.

For more information, visit intaktrec.ch, nobusinessrecords.com and relativepitchrecords.com. Joey Baron is at The Stone at The New School Dec. 15th. Lou Grassi is at Soup & Sound Dec. 22nd. See Calendar.



Wild Lines: Improvising Emily Dickinson
Jane Ira Bloom (Out-Line)
by George Kanzler

Essentially, this is two CDs of (largely) the same music. The first is instrumental, delivered by soprano saxophonist Jane Ira Bloom with pianist Dawn Clement, bassist Mark Helias and drummer Bobby Previte. The second CD revisits the same tunes, in slightly different order, edited and expanded to include the words of Emily Dickinson, recited by actress Deborah Rush. Enhanced winningly by the words, which reveal Bloom's inspiration for the music, the music on the second CD is more enjoyable with Dickinson's words and Rush's masterful delivery illuminating it.

Dickinson's poetry was a harbinger of modern free verse, often very short, neither rhymed nor in a regularly perceived meter, although the longest poem here, "A Star Not Far Enough", does have five stanzas of four metered lines, the second and fourth of each one rhyming. It is spoken, unlike the other 12 tracks with

words, at the end of the music, in this case a lyrical, semi-rubato ballad by the duo of Bloom and Clement. The music reflects the bucolic nature of the poem and other tunes find references for the music in the words. "Singing the Triangle", a poem about a circus parade on Triangle Street in Amherst, Massachusetts, elicits a marching beat and bright, piping tune over syncopated rhythms. "Cornets of Paradise", from lines in another poem, conjures martial "Drums of the Phantom Battlements", casting the words over toms that usher in soprano evoking said cornets over an accelerating tempo, saxophone and piano trading solos as if in a race. "Mind Gray River" lays a somber ostinato bassline under the words, the band following up with the same pattern under yearning saxophone and piano soloing over and interacting with Previte's toms.

Bloom is inspired by the poetry to create singular song forms beyond usual 12-bar and 32-bar AABA forms, stretching the structure of "Say More" with unison lines and ostinati sprinkled with thematic solos. Two of the most striking and successful pieces—both as instrumentals and with poems—are "Alone & In A Circumstance" and "One Note from One Bird". The former is a fanciful depiction of a spider interrupting the poet's "circumstance"; the music, with dance-march drumming, interrupted by abrupt turnarounds during saxophone and piano solos. The latter, inspired by a very short poem (the first half is "One note from/ One Bird/ is better than/ a million words") has a knotty line reminiscent of Thelonious Monk, at his favorite tempo, with angular chords flirting with dissonance, prodding Bloom and Clement to their best solos on this exemplary album of poetry-inspired jazz.

For more information, visit janeirabloom.com. Bloom is at The DiMenna Center Dec. 16th with Sarah Weaver. See Calendar.

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