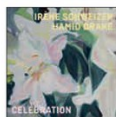


Irène Schweizer/ Hamid Drake Celebration

Intakt CD 363 (CD) ★★★★★

Irène Schweizer (p) and Hamid Drake (d).
Rec. July 2019



Swiss pianist Irène Schweizer has been a towering figure of European free jazz for six decades - often compared with Cecil Taylor, but though she possesses much of the late American legend's blistering technique and impetuous improvisational drive, she has embraced more explicit references to the jazz tradition over the years, from ragtime to Monk, Carla Bley, or Abdullah Ibrahim. Schweizer has also been an inspired collaborator with drummers (she's a pretty good one herself) in an intimate improv-duo format she has favoured for years.

This concert from Austria's 2019 Nickelsdorf Konfrontationen festival with Chicago percussionist and frequent partner Hamid Drake marked the pianist's 80th birthday - and was apparently embarked on in a fierce Schweizer mood since the pair had not been able to get onstage until midnight, but the delay seems to have done nothing but good. Schweizer darts, chord-clangs, and unleashes streams of detailed melody against Drake's racing patterns and exclamatory smacks before withdrawing to quiet contemplation and then amiably bouncing swing on 'A Former Dialogue', grooves in a bluesily muscular Ibrahim manner on 'The Good Life', and shares skittering under-the-lid pluckings and edgily scuttling percussion with Drake on 'Stringfever'. An enthrallingly churning South African townships tribute to the late bassist Johnny Dyani on 'Song For Johnny' is a highlight, but there are plenty. Intakt's editor Patrik Landolt reportedly said he'd never had to shorten so much prolonged applause on a release, and it's no surprise. **John Fordham**

Charlie Sepúlveda & The Turnaround This Is Latin Jazz

Highnote HCD 7331 (CD) ★★★★★

Charlie Sepúlveda, Randy Brecker (t), Steve Turre (tb), Nestor Torres (f), Miguel Zenon (as), Norberto Ortiz (ts), Eduardo Zayas (p), Gabriel Rodríguez (b), Francisco Alcalá (d), Nicholas Cosaboom (cga) and Natalia Mercado (v).
Rec. February 2020



Recorded at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola at Jazz at Lincoln Center just before the

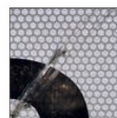
pandemic struck, this album was intended, as its title suggests, to highlight the Latin, hard bop and Puerto Rican mix that has been central to the music scene in New York since the 1940s. Sepúlveda has had plenty of experience, playing in the band of his cousin Eddie Palmieri, and it's evident in the confident swagger of his own group here. The opening 'Liberty' roars into life with a vibrant solo from special guest Randy Becker swooping all over his range. Steve Turre's feature, 'Tales from the Wall' opens in straight-ahead tempo, but relaxes into a Latin groove for the solos. But - as in Palmieri's band - there's a strong sense of humour here, and the long pauses in the intro to 'Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White' are held long enough to draw giggles from the crowd, who then show their enthusiasm for the eloquent flute solo of Nestor Torres, who's also urged on by grunts of encouragement from the band. All in all, this is a band that knows how to have a good time, and communicate it to a crowd, and the soloists don't go in for grandstanding, they roll up their sleeves and get on with it. The closing 'Peer Magic' is a 15-minute romp that grows out of a bass guitar solo from Rodriguez, picks up tempo, and revisits Torres' flute, before a vibrant keyboard solo accompanied by a positive arsenal of polyrhythmic percussion, plus whistles and cries, brings the band to a triumphant climax. **Alyn Shipton**

Chris Sharkey Presets

Not Applicable Recordings NOT055 (CD)

★★★★★

Chris Sharkey (g, effects). Rec. date not stated



With the ever-expanding range of digital processing available creative electric guitarists inevitably explore the instrument's potential as a sonic generator. In the hands (and feet) of artists like Eivind Aarset or Stian Westerhus pedal boards become modular synths, combined with the midi potential of laptops to create meta-instruments in their own right. Five

years ago guitarist Chris Sharkey spent two months experimenting with his 'decades worth' of pedals, a computer interface and a simple stereo recorder, layering improvised electronic sound into hours of music. Following months of patient listening and careful selection the 11 tracks of *Presets* emerged as his favourite pieces, comprising some 90 minutes of pure electronica.

This is sound to abandon yourself to, a series of abstract paintings morphing through time. You soon lose any conventional sense of representation or structure and accept the music's own aesthetic logic. Fanciful titles perhaps hint at meanings - 'Evangelist (Salvation History)' might evoke a chapel organ and a ghost choir at times - but on the whole they are just verbal reference points. The essence lies in texture and change through processes (whether linear or circular), elements of blend and contrast, sudden shifts or prolonged stasis. In a quiet contrast to Sharkey's often frenetic and jagged musical persona revealed in Acoustic Ladyland and Trio VD, *Presets* is a profound listening experience, far from ambient wallpaper, and Sharkey's compositional judgement proves extremely sound (pun intended) throughout. **Tony Benjamin**

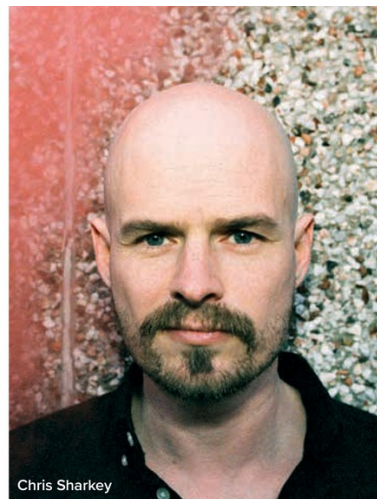
Ches Smith's We All Break Path Of Seven Colors

Pyroclastic PR14 (CD) ★★★★★

Ches Smith (d), Matt Mitchell (p), Miguel Zenon (as), Nick Dunston (b) Sirene Dantor-Rene (v), Daniel Brevil, Markuz Schwartz and Fanfan Jean-Guy Rene (perc). Rec. 2020



For many it is hard to see past the stigma attached to Haitian voodoo. Depictions in western popular culture of priests casting evil spells amid 'savage rituals' feed into deep-seated prejudices about African-derived belief systems. Yet the reality is very different. This is a spiritual practise that has healing and redemption at its core. Ches Smith's remarkable album reflects that in no uncertain terms, blending vocals that have a deeply uplifting quality with rhythms that are coursing with irresistible vitality. Two discs of material sees Smith present different ensembles as the focal points shift, *Path Of*



Chris Sharkey

Seven Colors featuring an octet with sax, vocals and rhythm section and the bonus set *We All Break* a quartet comprising piano and three drummers. In each case there are creative peaks. The latter is defined by a brilliant intricacy in vaulting grooves where the sharp, stinging resonance of percussion is central, while the former highlights the majestically beautiful vocals of Sirene Dantor-Rene, whose imperious, slightly, grainy delivery slightly recalls the legendary Toto Bissainthe.

Dantor-Rene reaches sublime heights on many occasions, especially when engaging in rousing call and response with other singers. Smith anchors proceedings commandingly, though pianist Matt Mitchell also performs to good effect, striking a crucial balance between improvisatory flourish and rhythmic reinforcement of the orchestral character of the drums. Since his emergence as a sideman to Tim Berne among others Smith has gone on to do solo work that is of a consistently high quality, mostly on the experimental edges of the New York scene. But *Path Of Seven Colors* sees him go to the next level in terms of flourishing ideas and focused application.

Kevin Le Gendre

Guido Spannocchi Perihelion

Self-release/Bandcamp (DL) ★★★★★

Guido Spannocchi (as), Jay Phelps (t), Sylvie Leys (ts), Robert Mitchell (p, el p), Michelangelo Scandroglio (b) and Tristan Banks (d).
Rec. 1 December 2019



Austrian-born, London-based saxophonist Spannocchi's considerable