



Back to the Woods
Uri Sharlin and The Dogcat Ensemble
(Folk Dune-Naxos)
by Elliott Simon

The influx of Balkan, Eastern European and South American music into NYC jazz circles has been concurrent with an uptick in the number of NYC jazz accordionists. Uri Sharlin, originally from Israel, has had a presence in all of these world jazz scenes since arriving in NYC. For this session, Sharlin and The DogCat Ensemble provide an entertaining, if somewhat uneven, journey.

Sharlin's core quartet is rounded out by guitarist Kyle Sanna, bassist Jordan Scannella and percussionist Rich Stein. Sanna's interplay with Sharlin, whether comping accordion runs, adding Spanish or any number of other ethnic colorations to the mix or soloing over Sharlin's chords is superb. CD opener "Night Swim" begins as a pseudo rocker and evolves into a very tight uptempo worldy offering using this core quartet formula. The quartet then switches to exotica for "Monte Verde", complete with Arthur Lyman-inspired animal noises.

On three of these eight tunes, Sharlin adds bass clarinetist Matt Darriau, bassoonist Gili Sharett and percussionist John Hadfield while two others feature

flutist Itai Kriss. Darriau's feel for multiple world music subgenres is readily apparent and he adds an infusion of klezmer to "One for Frankie" and partners with Sharett's unique timbre to free up Hermeto Pascoal's "Dia #342". "Real Dogcat" also has bassoon and clarinet up front but this time in a laid-back ska. With all these flavors already in the mix, "Mundau by Day" and "Mundau by Night", despite pretty acoustic work from Sanna in the AM and seductive percussion and bass in the PM, disappoint as does a funk-up "Don Quixote". Sharlin has a specific interest in Brazilian music and closer "Baião" has a catchy melody, stellar flute solo and unique bassoon/accordion interchange.

Back to the Woods is at its best when it showcases Sharlin's ability to mix disparate influences with uncommon instrumentation into cohesive world music.

For more information, visit folkdune.com. Sharlin is at *The Stone Nov. 5th, 6th, 7th and 10th with Roberto Rodriguez*. See *Calendar*.



Arc Trio
Mario Pavone (Playscape)
by David R. Adler

Recorded live at Cornelia Street Café in February 2013, *Arc Trio* finds veteran bassist Mario Pavone in turbulent waters with pianist Craig Taborn and drummer Gerald Cleaver. These aren't some random sidemen: Taborn and Cleaver share a bond going back to the Detroit scene of the late '80s. The freedom and focus they bring to these eight Pavone originals is often astounding.

As it happens, *Arc Trio* comes just five months after Taborn's trio debut for ECM, *Chants*, also featuring Cleaver. While *Chants* richly deserves the accolades it has received, Pavone's outing is just as vital and shouldn't slip under the radar. It's fueled by a similar simpatico, though with a grittier aesthetic and compositional logic. *Chants* boasts that exalted, polished ECM sound; *Arc Trio* captures a night in a club with a piano that Taborn wouldn't likely choose otherwise, but bends to his will nonetheless.

In his liner notes, Pavone gets specific about his obsessions and models: Paul Bley's *The Floater*, Andrew Hill's *Smokestack*, Steve Kuhn's *Three Waves* and Keith Jarrett's *Life Between the Exit Signs*, along with certain works by Dick Twardzik and Muhal Richard Abrams. One way or another, the rhythmic thrust and texture of all this music gets filtered into *Arc Trio*, beginning with the frenetic double-stop bass riff and dense piano theme of "Andrew" (first heard on the 2008 quintet release *Ancestors*, featuring Cleaver).

Pavone's writing is often spare and concise, with tightly played heads but also room for open blowing over solid tempos. While there aren't many prescribed chords, the pieces have distinct tonal personalities conjured by the brilliance of the players involved. "Eyto", "Hotep" and the closing "Dialect" have a jumpy, unpredictable flow while "Poles" and "Alban Berg" usher in a slower swing vibe. Taborn is explosive and virtuosic on "Not Five Kimono" and "Box in Orange", both also found on previous Pavone outings but given new life. Cleaver is dynamic and funky throughout, though sonically it is Pavone's snappy bass that gets captured the best.

For more information, visit playscape-recordings.com. Pavone is at *ShapeShifter Lab Nov. 8th*. See *Calendar*.

UNEARTHED GEM



Eponymous
Melodic Art-Tet
(NoBusiness)



Live
The Group
(NoBusiness)

by Ken Waxman

Although, according to detractors, all free jazz sessions sound alike, these high-quality dates put a lie to that supposition. Both also suggest why the music was never popular. Each CD shares trumpeter Ahmed Abdullah and features allstars at all positions: 1974's *Melodic Art-Tet* included tenor and soprano saxophonist/flutist Charles Brackeen, bassist William Parker, drummer Roger Blank and percussionist Tony Waters (Ramadan Mumeen) while 1986's *The Group* was filled out by alto saxophonist Marion Brown, violinist Billy Bang, bassists Sirone or Fred Hopkins and drummer Andrew Cyrille.

Brackeen, who composed all but one of the Art-Tet's pieces, enlivened many '70s sessions. A gritty soloist on tenor, with a tone reminiscent of Dewey Redman, his flute and soprano work is surprisingly refined. Meanwhile Abdullah manages to stay passionate while blasting away. Former Sun Ra Arkestra member Blank and future Downtown fixture Parker maintain a shifting beat tinted by Waters' hand patterning. Triumphant throughout, the quartet forges an imaginative fusion. It mixes nimble heads with frenetic soloing and Africanized polyrhythmic drumming without neglecting tune structure. "Time and Money; YAMACA; Open; Pit Chena; In the Chapel; With Cheer" is a particularly illustrative sequence, a marvel of shading and synthesis, violent screeds alternating with tempo-changing sequences that pulsate with near-hummable themes to moderate confrontational avant garde impulses. Unfortunately the fusion preferred in the mid-'70s was jazz-rock, propelled by amplified instruments. Too arty for the mainstream and not electric enough for the groove crowd, the band passed into history.

The Group suffered a similar fate 12 years later. Neobop had replaced fusion as the popular jazz genre, but this quintet was too outside. This was despite *Live's* track list, which included Charles Mingus' "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" plus Bang's arrangement of a Miriam Makeba (!) composition. Clearly *The Group* aimed to excite a live audience. Take the aforementioned Mingus tune. Before the familiar melody appears, Brown interpolates quotes from "Wade in the Water" and "Honky Tonk"; subsequent theme variations are shaded by Abdullah's muted plunger tones plus Bang's bottleneck guitar-like slashes. On Makeba's "Amanpondo", Bang's torque builds up the tension while Cyrille provides the tune's climax with a solo that defines a steady swing beat.

Luck and circumstances determine what bands become famous. Despite overall excellence, destiny was on neither band's side here. Both were too far behind or too far ahead for contemporary popularity.

For more information, visit nobusinessrecords.com. Ahmed Abdullah is at *Sistas' Place Nov. 9th*. See *Calendar*.

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