

GLOBE UNITY: LITHUANIA



Live at Vilnius Jazz Festival
William Hooker/Liudas Mockūnas (NoBusiness)
ME
Dmitrij Golovanov (s/r)
Lights of Darkness
Kęstutis Vaiginis (s/r)
 by Tom Greenland

Lithuania has a growing rep as the jazziest former Soviet republic. Ranks of conservatory trained, avant-leaning artists, often drawing on folk roots, are making their musical marks beyond the Baltics.

Reed player Liudas Mockūnas exemplifies this trend, equally comfortable in jazz and classical idioms, but especially adroit in the free-improv milieu, where his radically bent notes and multiphonic detonations define a signature sound. *Live at Vilnius Jazz Festival* is an outstanding duet set with American drummer William Hooker featuring Mockūnas on tenor, alto and soprano saxophones. The first piece begins with quietly malleted tom-toms and mumbled tenor phrases, reaching a heady climax some seven-and-a-half minutes later, spurred by heavily distorted, quivering horn tones, segueing to a more assertive episode in which the tenor resounds gruffly, like an inspired preacher, capped by an intricately melodic coda. Hooker maintains excitement with terraced plateaus, contrasting skins and cymbals, ping-ponging phrases with Mockūnas. The third track reveals more of Mockūnas' lyric prowess and unique sound-sculpting techniques on alto while the final track is the most abstract, punctuated with theremin-like swoops and sirens on soprano.

Pianist Dmitrij Golovanov, a ubiquitous presence on the Vilnius scene (often collaborating with Mockūnas), offers an intimate portfolio of his work with *ME*, a solo piano outing. Like Keith Jarrett, he's developed a syncretic style that melds the rigorous elegance of classical composition with the expressive ecstasy of jazz. On three tracks titled "Self Reflection" (Nos. 1-3) he affects a postmodern ambiance through constantly shifting key centers, restless attacks, knotty themes and tensile chord clusters. On "Consciousness" he digs into a complex left-hand vamp, creating hand-against-hand tension à la Erroll Garner; on "Infected" he ranges broadly across the keys with serpentine figures that coil tightly only to snap apart—both tracks suggesting what it might sound like if Mozart sat in with one of George Clinton's funk outfits. In contrast, "Infinity" is impressionistic and understated while "The New End" is bucolic yet restive, tuneful yet intelligent.

Lights of Darkness is tenor/soprano saxophonist Kęstutis Vaiginis' third album as a leader (he also plays with Golovanov in Tree Stones Quartet), employing the talents of trumpeter Alex Sipiagin, pianist David Berkman, bassist Ed Howard and drummer Ferit Odman. Drawing freely from postbop influences, especially Coltrane, Vaiginis' tenor tone is tough but gentle. Compositionally, he invokes Wayne Shorter, penning memorable melodies that float over color-coded harmonies. Sipiagin, the perfect foil here, plays with the brassy bluster of a young Freddie Hubbard, often trading phrases with Vaiginis like runners passing a baton. The rhythm section is exceptional, giving what might otherwise have been an introspective outing its urgency and relevance.

For more information, visit nobusinessrecords.com, soundcloud.com/dmitrij-golovanov and kestutisvaiginis.com



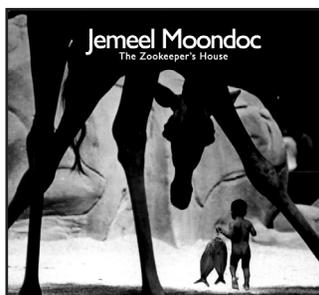
Music For Flute & Double-Bass / Rain Forest
Jeremy Steig/Eddie Gomez (CMP-Art of Groove)
 by Andrey Henkin

It is nice to imagine that the collaboration between flutist Jeremy Steig and bassist Eddie Gomez was a response to the question upright bassists hear throughout their careers: "Don't you wish you played the flute?"

As part of its Collectors Premium collection, Art of Groove has reissued a pair of albums originally released on CMP Records: *Music for Flute & Double-Bass* and *Rain Forest*. The former is a duet session from December 1978 while the latter is a February-March 1980 outing, which includes Mike Nock (keyboards), Nana Vasconcelos (percussion), Steve Gadd and Jack DeJohnette (drums), Ray Barretto (congas) and Karl Ratzter (guitar); each disc features a live bonus duet track taken from the 1978 Berlin Jazz Days.

The duo session is simply beautiful and is as loving a partnership as Jack Sprat and his wife. Due to a very detailed recording and the abilities of the players, a listener can feel the pluck of fingers against bass strings, the short journey of breath along a metal tube. Steig and Gomez split or collaborate on composing duties for eight ethereal tracks and, with the mystical matching of textures, the album sounds like it was recorded in the woods of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, particularly when Steig runs his instrument through effects pedals. If *Rain Forest* is less successful, it's because the simplicity of the earlier disc has now been buried in fusion excesses that sound odd to the ears over three decades later. Steig and Gomez are again the composers but have transplanted Oberon and Titania into a hip nightclub where they don't quite fit in. Buy the set and stick with Disc One.

For more information, visit mig-music.com. Gomez is at Saint Peter's Jul. 29th. See Calendar.



The Zookeeper's House
Jemeel Moondoc (Relative Pitch)
 by Clifford Allen

Alto saxophonist Jemeel Moondoc has been a stalwart, if not exactly often-recognized, figure in New York's creative music climate since the mid '70s. His initial stab with the cooperative Muntu (with bassist William Parker, trumpeter Roy Campbell, Jr. and drummer Rashid Bakr) was crucial in the post-Loft years, touring Europe into the early '80s. Moondoc also worked extensively with drummer Denis Charles, vocalist Ellen Christi and in Parker's ensembles. Survival being a necessity, Moondoc worked in an architecture firm and this has periodically taken him away from performing for lengthy stretches, though his reemergence in the late '90s and early '00s was roundly welcomed.

Moondoc was off the scene again until recently; some of his back catalog has been reissued by Lithuanian label NoBusiness and last year saw a duo with Tristano-school pianist Connie Crothers (*Two & Two*, also on

Relative Pitch). Now a formidable set of trio, quartet and quintet material has surfaced, centered on the saxophonist and a rhythm section of bassist Hilliard Greene and drummer Newman Taylor Baker for a program of originals and a cover of Alice Coltrane's "Ptah, the El Daoud". Moondoc's early work looked to Cecil Taylor, Bill Dixon and Milford Graves, whom he encountered at Antioch College in Ohio and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, though the saxophonist's own dry, discursive approach landed somewhere in between Steve Lacy, Ornette Coleman and Jimmy Lyons. The closing ballad, "For the Love of Cindy", is a fine example of the core trio at work, a delicate walk through a glassy field as Moondoc unfurls quavering, conversational lines and squirrely hops with a gentle, grainy tone. Baker's evaporating, brushy constant is both subtle accompaniment and in a world of its own, as Greene maintains a thick pizzicato tonic.

Two tracks add either the piano of Matthew Shipp or the trumpet and trombone of the late Campbell and Steve Swell. It's interesting to hear Moondoc with piano and specifically a pianist with as much harmonic depth as Shipp—it can take a moment to get used to how the former's flintiness works with the latter's refractive pools on the title opener, but that contrast makes for a robust whole. "Ptah, the El Daoud" builds from the thick-voiced swing of "Little Blue Elvira" and is taken at a quick tempo, Swell's wonderfully angled slush and Campbell's fat, pensive natter a fine soloistic complement to Moondoc's brushy blues. *The Zookeeper's House* is an excellent view of Moondoc's art where it stands now, as well as a fertile slice of contemporary New York improvised music.

For more information, visit relativepitchrecords.com. Moondoc is at Vision Festival Jul. 10th with William Parker. See Calendar.



more info? www.alexiscale.com

July

9 Jazz on the Plaza
 St. Peter's Church, 54th & Lex
 17 Grasso's, Cold Spring Harbor, LI
 18 Jazz at Kitano, NYC
 31 Carnegie Room, Nyack, NY