



That's a Computer
Lucas Pino (Outside In Music)
 by Donald Elfman

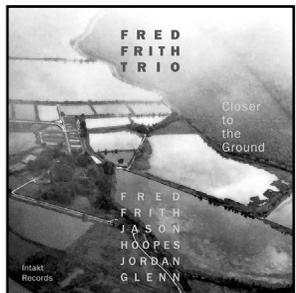
Inspired by a former professor's dismissive comments, reed player Lucas Pino's latest outing is a beautifully crafted set of compositions blending a large-group ethos with smart, challenging lines and combinations. With the exception of drummer Jimmy Macbride, the members of the band have been playing together since 2009 and are fully attentive to the demands of Pino's writing for this second release from the group.

The relationship of this band and its approach to music-making is beautifully embodied in "Horse of a Different Color". It's a fast, frenetic blues in which the soloists—alto saxophonist Alex LoRe, trombonist Nick Finzer, trumpeter Mat Jodrell, pianist Glenn Zaleski, baritone saxophonist Andrew Gutauskas and guitarist Rafał Sarnecki—make their statements over the key of their choice, the band providing engaging backing.

The tunes are finely crafted: "Film at 11" is delicate and heartbreakingly slow with beautiful solos by Zaleski and Pino; Sarnecki composed the dancing "Sueno de Gatos" to words by Pablo Neruda for guest vocalist Camila Meza; "Antiquity" by LoRe is a tribute to days of yore in its slow passion, stately rhythms and mix of horns; on "Look Into My Eyes", Pino is assured and directed, asking for people to engage with him and not their distractions (phones, computers, etc.); "Frustrations" is a dreamily slow and tense ballad given wordless color by Meza and Pino on bass clarinet.

The album closes with a kind of wink at the title with a brief and witty take on a theme from a classic Nintendo game, *Baseball Simulator 1000*. It's a lovely culmination to an album of engaging and smart music.

For more information, visit outsideinmusic.com. This band is at Smalls Feb. 25th. See Calendar.



Closer to the Ground
Fred Frith Trio (Intakt)
 by John Pietaro

Fred Frith, who turns 70 this month, is a perennial of global new music, a troubadour of experimentation. His career has ranged from the '70s British avant/progressive rock of Henry Cow and Art Bears to '80s-'90s downtown of Naked City, Massacre, Skeleton Crew and a mass of dates in the hundreds. But the guitarist states in the liner notes, "I realized that since 1965, I have NOT been a member of a band." Even more than 2016's *Another Day in Fucking Paradise*, this band is fully realized on *Closer to the Ground*.

Bassist Jason Hoopes and drummer Jordan Glenn create an interwoven series of layers developed from intimate musical connections; Frith refers to this as their "impenetrable secret language". Right from the first cut, "Bones to Pick with the Graveyard", a shape-shifting atmosphere is proudly exhibited. Whereas Glenn towers over the music with throbbing rhythmic

sonnets, sudden meter shifts and unexpected accents, Hoopes' use of drones and repetitive patterns lock each new pulsation, varying and expanding from the bottom before coloring Frith's own universe of sound. Even when the bassist leads (e.g., "Ruhebereich"), his patterns are centered around single notes, but never simplistically, as informed by the no wave genre as Anthony Braxton.

We've come to expect Frith to dominate the sonic field, but here—in a real band setting—he's challenged in a manner most satisfying. On "Stars Like Trees", Glenn's use of reverb-heavy percussion sounds perfectly liquid, but then "Betting on the World" is built on the propelling brand of funk where Prime Time thrived. With so much interlocking about him, Frith is free to create the compelling, frightfully melodic lines that might otherwise be lost. Outstanding piece: "A Path Made by Walking", exemplifying Frith's career wanderlust as much as the powerful solidity of this trio.

For more information, visit intaktrec.ch



An UnRuly Manifesto
James Brandon Lewis (Relative Pitch)
 by Robert Bush

Tenor saxophonist James Brandon Lewis' sixth release finds him leading a quintet with one foot in the unruly tradition of David S. Ware and Pharoah Sanders and the other in the spirit of Ornette Coleman's Prime Time, with psychedelic guitars and very active electric bass sharing the soundstage. Lewis has found a reliable frontline partner in trumpeter Jaimie Branch (who sounds like she has absorbed the work of Lester Bowie in Jack DeJohnette's criminally underrated New Directions band). Rounding out the group are Anthony Pirog (guitar), Luke Stewart (bass, electric bass) and Warren Trae Crudup III (drums).

The album tends to adhere to a formula of alternating very short yet well-composed interludes against several episodic and anthem-like postulations, where the horns really get a chance to stretch out. The title track finds bass, guitar and drums setting up a luxuriant vamp as a springboard for the languid melody shared by buzzing trumpet and raspy tenor saxophone, the latter favorably evoking everyone from Archie Shepp to Albert Ayler, with a heavy emphasis on a spiritual vibe.

After a brief mainstream snippet that brought the late Woody Shaw to mind, things take a sharp left turn on "Sir Real Denard", where bass comes front and center in a manner reminiscent of the great Jamaaladeen Tacuma. The band sounds like they are setting up a long, boiling climax and guitar strikes first with a wild, orgiastic solo. It's an exhilarating ride, to be sure.

Also in the epic category is "The Eleventh Hour", where guitar and bass carefully construct a layered tapestry to elicit the rather mournful unison melody from the horns. Branch sputters and growls and acts as a superb foil to the leader, who once again comes at the listener with an attractive urgency that seems quite prophetic, as if he is desperate to share a vital message. Also noteworthy is the musical shout-out to late bassist Charlie Haden, "Haden Is Beauty", which features an appropriately woody essay from Stewart, who's got monster chops on either instrument.

For more information, visit relativepitchrecords.com. This project is at Nublu 151 Feb. 27th. See Calendar.

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