

VITAL WEEKLY
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FRED VAN HOVE & ROGER TURNER – THE CORNER (CD by Relative Pitch Records)
MAGDA MAYAS & JIM DENLEY – TEMPLE JETZ (CD by Relative Pitch Records)
JOHN BUTCHER & JOHN EDWARDS & MARK SANDERS – LAST DREAM OF THE MORNING
(CD by Relative Pitch Records)

Relative Pitch Records is a NY-based label specialised in improvised music, operating since 2011. Considering these three new releases one would think they focus on veteran players. What also strikes, almost all players on these releases are from Europe, none of them from the US. Both observations are coincidental, looking in their back catalogue. Label founders Mike Panico and Kevin Reilly follow their own taste and ideas of improvised in choosing their releases. And this is the sole criterion. Belgian pianist Fred van Hove is one of those mastodons of European free improvised music, who celebrated his 80th birthday this year. We have to go back to 1969 to find his first appearance on the vinyl: 'Requiem for Che Guevara, Martin Luther, John Fitzgerald and Robert Kennedy, Malcolm X', with Peter Kowald, Han Bennink, a.o. as his mates. Those were different times! Also Roger Turner is in business already for a long period, starting his career at the end of the 70s. No wonder both have a very long list of collaborations and releases. Both played together for the first time in 1983 as members of the Lol Coxhills' Hot Love Orchestra. But this in fact is their first collaboration. Recorded live in concert in London, December 2015. The CD consists of two lengthy improvisations and two shorter ones. Van Hove plays in his own distinguished and personal style that has touches of classical and romantic music, and is also reminding me of Cecil Taylor. His rolling notes and extended exuberant rally's are played with a strong drive. He develops long extending and dynamic patterns. Overall I had the impression that Van Hove is in the leading position, with underlining and contrasting playing by Turner. With exceptions of course, like the second part of 'Shopped' that has an intense battle between the two. Another duo effort is the one by Magda Mays and Jim Denley. Mayas is a pianist from Berlin. In 2013 Relative Pitch Records already released a duo album ('Gardener') by Mayas with Australian pianist Chris Abrahams (The Necks'). With 'Temple Jetz' she works again with another important veteran of the Australian scene. Both unfold their ideas in four improvisations, lasting between 4 and 17 minutes. Denley plays alto sax and bass flute. Mays plays a clavinet (!), an old electric piano from 1970 with strings and metal chimes. An instrument that is no longer produced. Mayas plays above all the inside of this instrument, using objects and extended techniques in order to extend the sound spectrum. Also Denley is a player using many extended techniques. This makes that they have an incredible big potential of sounds to their disposal. They create very abstract, 'small-scale', sound improvisations. They play with textures, colour, and dynamics. Their interactions are full of details. And although multi-coloured, it is always possible to distinguish who is doing what. With 'Last Dream of the Morning' we are in the company of three famous players from the UK. All of them masters on their instruments, with many experience with other key improvisers from the UK and continent. In 2003 John Edwards recorded a cd with Mark Sanders ('Nisus Duets'), as well as one with John Butcher ('Optic'). But surely they met in various ensembles and projects over the years. This however is the first time, we have them as a trio on cd. We hear Butcher on saxophones, Edwards playing double bass and Sanders on drums. All of them take equally part, resulting in concentrated interplay and communication. They shape their conversations in a very to the point manner, giving relevance and content to each step they take. A very rewarding listening experience, which counts in fact for all three releases. (DM)