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JAZZ SUMMER READING GUIDE



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sound art, installations, new composition, interdisciplinary performance, and jazz were all represented by the wide-ranging curation of the event. A barrage of current musical practices were on display, though that barrage was taken to a literal extreme with the opening night's first act, **Markus Schmickler**, in Bochum. Playing a piece on his laptop called ">22 gliders<- rule" while seated in the audience, Schmickler assaulted our eardrums with multiple layers of spectral noise. The dense violence of the decibel force on display obscured the dynamics of several curious sounds at his disposal: any distinct sound that emerged fizzled into the overpowering mass. Many people walked out, perhaps preferring to play with the wonderful installation set up in the bar area by **Björn Schülke**. Several bright-orange, wig-like objects hung in space and on walls, each spinning, vibrating and emitting sound at different levels based on their physical proximity to a live body. Various kinds of beeping ensued, with the pitches changing theremin-like as the electromagnetic fields were approached. Colorful, engaging, and fun: evidence that sound installation doesn't have to be ascetic to be thoughtful. **Tobias Delius'** "Pingeling" sextet later that night turned out to be one of the festival's highlights. With **Pat Thomas** on piano, **Joe Williamson** on bass, **Paul Lovens** on drums, **Maartje ten Hoorn** on violin, and **Bart Maris** on trumpet, the band swung through a roster of tunes by Delius – hitting the sweet spots of syncopation, and navigating openly improvised areas with a skillful balance between composure and risk. As a mighty enthusiast for Lovens' style of slaying, swaying rhythms, I thoroughly appreciated how Delius' compositions incorporated freedom for all the musi-

cians while still maintaining an overall clarity of movement. New to my ears, Maris' wide-ranging trumpeting talents found an exquisitely receptive outlet for their expression in this band, and I was glad to be introduced to his music.

The venue in Dortmund was an enormous, renovated industrial warehouse-cum-artspace, which was approached via a long meandering footpath that took you around other warehouses in various stages of reconstruction and abandonment: an excellent introduction to the fresh use and abuse of technology to be found within. Short films from the late '60s and early '70s by dancer/ choreographer/ filmmaker **Elaine Summers** bookended the evening's proceedings. The incredibly sloooowww-motion encounter of two girls skipping along a street, encountering each other, and circling in and out of frame in "two girls from downtown Iowa" made a glorious ode to human locomotion; their leaps are revealed in such detail by the slow-motion that I often got the sense they would just keep rising. Utterly gorgeous, simple joy. Summers' "Absence and presence" starkly contrasted white light with silhouetted limbs in the foreground, matching – and perhaps even conflating – sensuality with abstraction. The performance of **Gordon Monahan's** "Speaker Swinging," directed by the composer, also explored this relationship between physicality and perception. On each of three elevated platforms stood a man with a length of wire attached to a small speaker and a lightbulb; on cue they began swinging the speakers around their heads, each emitting a different crackling tone from an old oscillator that Monahan controlled and adjusted throughout the performance. The lights went on and off; performers got tired, visibly struggling to keep the speakers from hitting the ground; the arcs of the soundpaths constantly shifted and whirled around the listening bodies.

The **Kristoffer Zegers Project** in Herne included a sax quartet and a double sax quartet with tape accompaniment. The natural funkiness of a saxophone pop was amply employed in these compositions: rambunctiously bassy booms of clogged breath bounced

delightfully across a spectrum of trills. Compared to the astute instrumental prowess of the musicians involved, I didn't

understand the need for the digitized clunkiness of one tape piece or the dragon's den ominosity of another. Still, the performers' thumping and darting saxes made those distractions easy to disregard. Dancer **Fine Kwiatkowski's** duet with guitarist **Erhard Hirt** held the audience rapt. Like moving through mud that became lava, movements were singed by sound, flinging sharp elbows over a hunched back, or shaking in place. Kwiatkowski is a dancer that I didn't watch as necessarily human, but more like skin in motion. Hirt's lingering, layered notes warmed the air with suspense. "Annunciation," **Barry Guy's** project for two violins, bass, piano, and the inimitable vocal stylistics of Jaap Blonk, left me dissatisfied. This set didn't have the energy, oomph or fervor of a Barry Guy improvisation, and, unfortunately, it also lacked the skillful meshing of structure with personality that typically characterizes his compositions for specific ensembles. Blonk's dramatics contrasted overbearingly with the stiff arrangements.

The final night began with a "Composers Club:" 5 compositions involving electronics were performed or played by their respective composers, and discussed with the audience afterwards. **Maximilian Marcoll's** "p4.1103" for laptop bristled somewhere between amplified wood crackling and water bubbling in a bowl, like the magnification of a lizard dragging its tongue across its teeth: wet but abrasive. Later in the evening, an improvised drum solo and film by **Tony Buck** yielded another successful multi-media work – an exceptional coup for a small festival considering how compromised such work often appears. In the film, a heart-shaped block of ice melts, boils, and dissipates into gas; but this is played backwards, so that what we first see is an empty pan, then bubbles, then, much later, ice forming. With a profound lack of tension in his body, Buck made light, sweeping gestures across the cymbals and drum heads, dragging drumtips around assorted objects with a magically dapper touch.

What I appreciated most about this festival was its open embrace of the flourishing diversity of contemporary sonic activity. Sadly, such quality work is often sourly ignored and unjustly misrepresented as simply "experimental." ■

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31st International Festival of Free Improvised Music
August 5-7 2004

Theater Zuidpool, Lange Noordstraat 11, B-2000 Antwerp (Belgium)
Verenigde Protestantse Kerk, Lange Winkelstraat 5, B-2000 Antwerp
Performers include Avram Fefer/Bobby Few; Ruf Der Heimat with Ernst-Ludwig Petrowski and Thomas Borgmann; Paul Plimley/Lisle Ellis; Veryan Weston; The 54 with Johannes Bauer, Ernst Reijseger, Eugene Chadbourne and Peter Hollinger; Fred Van Hove.

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Sant. Anna Arresi Jazz Festival
August 30-September 5, 2004
Tra Sardegna e Jazz 2004

Performances include tributes to Eric Dolphy by Nexus, ICP, and David S. Ware/Matthew Shipp. Other performers include Miroslav Vitous leading two quartets and a trio; Marc Ribot quartet with Henry Grimes; David S. Ware, Matthew Shipp and William Parker in various configurations; Tim Berne/Umberto Petrin. And more.

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Talos Festival

September 1-5, 2004

Ruvo di Puglia, Bari, South Italy

17 Concerts, 100 musicians. Performers include: Phil Minton/Veryan Weston Duo; Louis Sclavis Quartet; Keith Tippett; 4Walls; Stefano Battaglia; Michel Portal/

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(see advertisement) ■

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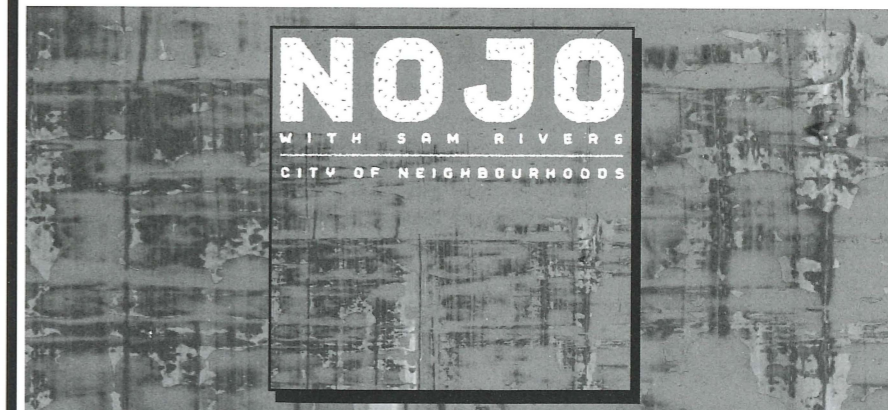
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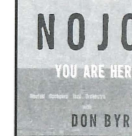
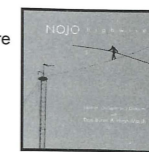
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