

INFO

LES DISQUES
victo

VICTO cd097

NOW ORCHESTRA & MARILYN CRISPELL

«POLA»

1. Pola (Coat Cooke-Socan) 3'02"
2. Yin Yang (Marilyn Crispell-BMI) 15'33"
3. March (Coat Cooke-Socan) 2'59"
4. M.C. (Ron Samworth-Socan) 12'31"
5. Broken Dreams (Coat Cooke-Socan) 12'12"
6. Suffused with Blue Light (Coat Cooke-Socan) 10'33"

NOW ORCHESTRA

Coat Cooke, direction artistique

Kate Hammett-Vaughan : voix

Bruce Freedman : saxophone alto

Graham Ord : saxophones ténor et soprano, flûte

Saul Berson : saxophone alto, clarinette, flûte

John Korsrud : trompette, bugle

Kevin Elashuk : trompette, bugle

Rod Murray : trombone

Brad Muirhead : trombone basse

Ron Samworth : guitare

Paul Blaney : contrebasse

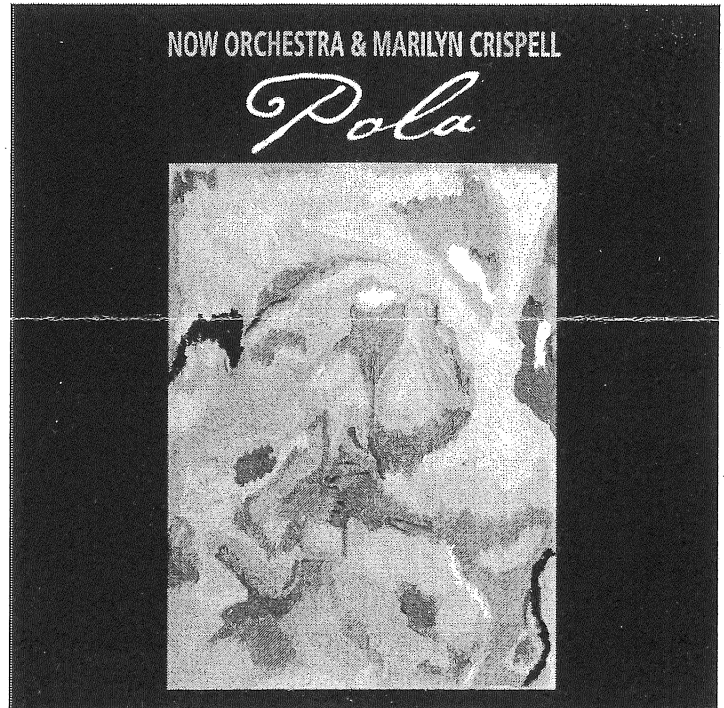
Clyde Reed : contrebasse

Dylan van der Schyff : batterie

Coat Cooke : saxophones baryton et ténor, flûte

Invitée : **Marilyn Crispell** : piano

Enregistré au studio The Factory de Vancouver les 26 et 27 novembre 2004.



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"... I regard the NOW Orchestra as one of the finest large creative ensembles active in the last decade. The combinations of high levels of individual creativity and virtuosity with a strong sense of collectivity is a rare and treasured combination that the NOW Orchestra manifests very strongly..."

George Lewis, Earshot Jazz

LES DISQUES
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NOW Orchestra with Marilyn Crispell

Pola

Victo

Vancouver saxophonist Coat Cooke's 13-piece NOW Orchestra might be most notable as one of the largest backing bands in jazz, having worked with George Lewis and Rene Lussier, among others. This time out, they're ably joined by pianist Marilyn Crispell, who

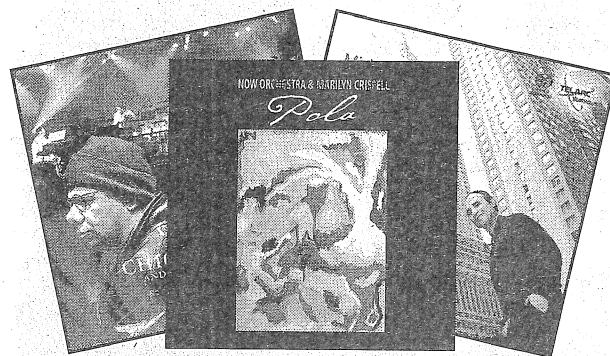


isn't there as a featured soloist but an integrated band member – the way it oughta be, even if it might disappoint some who look to the disc for the sort of energetic playing her own records have shown less and less of in recent years.

The studio session starts off strong, with a quick, three-minute romp by Cooke that shows the ensemble's strength and gives the record its title. They then move in to Crispell's one composition here, the 15-minute "Yin Yang," which shows a strong integration of composing, arranging, conducting and playing. Two more Cooke pieces and one by guitarist Ron Samworth complete the set. Throughout, scattering horn lines, fluid piano and driving energy make the whole affair more than a little reminiscent of the Michael Mantler/Carla Bley Jazz Composer's Orchestra of the late '60s and early '70s.

The orchestra marks 20 years of playing together—sometimes with ongoing weekly engagements—next year, and the clean movement and keen playing built over that time are well evident here. If Crispell fans would hope to hear more of her than the disc offers, her contribution to the set list alone is worth the price of admission.

KURT GOTTSCHALK



Live in Molde

Chick Corea/Trondheim Jazz Orchestra (MNJ)

Rhapsody in Blue Michel Camilo (Telarc)

Pola

Now Orchestra/Marilyn Crispell (Victo)

by Judith Insell

When three established jazz pianists pair up with three large ensembles, how could you go wrong? In these three cases everything goes just right!

Marilyn Crispell and the Now Orchestra offer up wonderful avant garde interactions on *Pola*. Crispell's piano becomes a thread in a musical tapestry of colors and Kate Hammett-Vaughan's voice appears throughout, adding rich and vibrant texture. Much of the CD features soloists freely improvising over densely composed background structures. Each instrumentalist in the Now Orchestra is a top-notch musician, improvising solos that stretch the limits of their instruments. *Pola* represents free jazz in the most positive light.

Corea, Camilo and Crispell are bravely pursuing the exploration of new jazz territories. Check out these CDs, they challenge and excite the ears.

ALLABOUTJAZZ-NEWYORK | April 2006^m

18 mai 2006

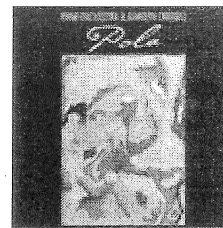
NOW Orchestra & Marilyn Crispell - (Victo)

Pola

Réjean Beaucage

C'est le deuxième disque de l'orchestre de Vancouver sous étiquette Victo, après celui enregistré avec René Lussier. Ici, il est augmenté de la magnifique pianiste **Marilyn Crispell**, une favorite de l'étiquette, qui y apparaît pour la sixième fois. Il ne s'agit pas de l'enregistrement d'un concert au FIMAV, mais d'un projet de studio, enregistré en 2004. Quatre des pièces sont du saxophoniste et directeur artistique de l'orchestre, **Coat Cooke**, qui délaisse souvent le grand ensemble au profit du travail sur de petites cellules; une autre est du guitariste **Ron Samworth** et une dernière de la pianiste invitée, que l'on est heureux d'entendre chaque fois qu'elle se présente au milieu de l'orchestre, ce qui pourrait arriver plus souvent.

VOIA - MONTRÉAL



The Now Orchestra – Pola

(Victo CD 96)

Due out in October, this brand new offering by Vancouver's perennial musical collective NOW may well signal a new chapter in its history. Best known for its collaborations with cutting-edge composer-performers such as George Lewis, Barry Guy or Leo Smith, this band has brought back into the fold one of its past contributors, pianist Marilyn Crispell. In spite of her formidable musical presence, she is not put in the spotlight continuously, and avoids the trappings of a star soloist rambling on in front of a backdrop orchestra. In contrast, she integrates herself intelligently into the proceedings, soloing with as much panache and concision as well as accompanying to best effect. Six tracks cover this 57-minute side, four by the group's artistic director, reedist Coat Cooke, one by guitarist Ron Samworth, the final item ("Ying Yang") by the keyboardist, the latter being a veritable chiaroscuro of orchestral and soloistic colours.

BY MARC CHÉNARD

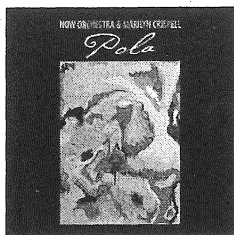
CODA

Now Orchestra and Marilyn Crispell: Pola

Victo CD097

★★★★☆

Made up of some of the strongest voices on the Vancouver scene, the Now Orchestra is an ensemble with a difference, focusing on collective improvisation. This latest release finds them with an old friend and former collaborator, pianist Marilyn Crispell, who contributes the slowly evolving, contrast-rich "Yin Yang". Four of the other compositions are by artistic director Coat Cooke, and one comes from guitarist Ron Samworth. All six tunes could serve as models of thematic conciseness, balanced with collective development via improvisation. Two of Cooke's shortest pieces are compressed vehicles that show the band's ability to burn within the rigours of closely controlled writing. The musicians blaze with just as much intensity on the other, longer vehicles – notably Samworth's "M.C.", which embeds one of the most lyrical brass lines on the album, Cooke's ominous, almost Wagnerian "Broken Dreams," and the pointillist and poetic "Suffused with Blue Light". PS



NOW Orchestra & Marilyn Crispell

Pola
Victo CD

The NOW Orchestra, thirteen musicians strong is here embellished by pianist Marilyn Crispell. This improvising ensemble is part of the Canadian New Orchestra workshop Society, an artist-run collective formed in 1977. *Pola* offers six tracks, all under the direction of saxophonist Coat Cooke. Crispell's appearance marks a return for her, having performed as guest soloist with the orchestra in 1988. Five of Cooke's compositions are joined by Crispell's "Yin Yang," which, as the title suggests, moves from breathy wisps to pummeling density over the course of its fifteen-plus minutes. Elsewhere, "Broken Dreams" is a study in other contrasts. Deeply resonant horn figures are encircled by flutes before Crispell's tentatively entering chordal bursts take the reins, building into a fury that beckons the whole orchestra back in. This is followed by a shift as a second movement brings the focus back down to smaller voiced minutia.

David Greenberger

SIGNAL to NOISE

| issue 42 :: summer 2006

NOW Orchestra and Marilyn Crispell

Pola. VICTO cd 097.
<www.victo.qc.ca>

by Ken Waxman

Without a whiff of prima-donna-meets-local-musicians attitude, Woodstock, N.Y. pianist-composer Marilyn Crispell is the newest out-of-town guest on this collaboration with Vancouver's venerable creative music collective, the New Orchestra Workshop (NOW) Orchestra.

Consisting of a clutch of Vancouver's top improvisers, who also lead their own bands, the thirteen-piece NOW Orchestra has in the past worked with Québecois guitarist René Lussier and California-based trombonist George Lewis. Unlike those strong personalities, Crispell—best-known for her tenure in reedist Anthony Braxton's 1980s-1990s quartet—assumes the piano chair on *Pola* as if she has been part of the ensemble for years.

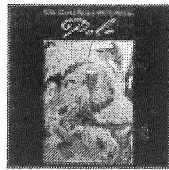
There are detriments as well as benefits to this approach. Performing one of her own compositions, three by NOW artistic director, multi-woodwind

player Coat Cook, and one by band-member guitarist Ron Samworth, the attitude-free pianist seems to demand no more than her allotted time on each track. A more dynamic and assertive stance on her part could perhaps have constrained some of the CD's weaker spots.

A prime example is the final track, Cook's more-than-ten-minute "Suffused with Blue Light." Although it consists of macro (whole band) and micro (soloist) fluctuations similar to those of the other tunes, the overall muted, massed harmonies are so understated that you suspect aimless noodling in some sections. A double double-bass duo from Paul Blarney and Clyde Reed is a highlight of the CD: with one of them striating the strings near the pegs and the other strumming full-fingered tremolos in mid-range, they become one eight-stringed monster, controlling the action with a steady drone. The downside, however, is the overly dramatic acting out of an impressionistic poem by vocalist Kate Hammett-Vaughan, whose whispering reading brings an unneeded solemnity to the proceedings.

On the upside, Crispell's "Ying Yang" and Samworth's "M.C.," (the latter likely written for the pianist), are two bang-up examples of what the NOW contributes at its best. On the former piece, the guitarist's rough plinking circles through tones, as the orchestra slowly insinuates itself onto the track. As the accompaniment moves from being felt to being heard, successive solos involve closely breathed flute lines, a sputtering double bass, and some contrapuntal hide-and-seek among trumpet, trombone, and tenor saxophone. After a display of near recital-like piano patterning, Hammett-Vaughan's wordless soprano moaning brings things to a fitting end.

The vocalist's purported speaking in tongues meets up with traffic-jam-like reed squeals and clashing cymbals from drummer Dylan van der Schyff in the climax of "M.C." Beginning with heraldic brass and bird-like reed squeals, the first variation on the initial elegiac line is superseded by strummed arpeggios and patterning from Crispell, unaccompanied, until a stretched octave turns the climax into a finale of measured tonality.

**NOW ORCHESTRA & MARILYN CRISPELL****Pola**[Victo, www.victo.qc.ca]

Vancouver-based powerhouse, NOW Orchestra [New Orchestra Workshop] has been churning out records with guest artists for around fifteen years now. Everyone from Barry Guy, George Lewis, Butch Morris, Wadada Leo Smith, Rene Lussier and countless others have been in residence with the Orchestra or have recorded a record along with them. They have such a strong following in the Vancouver area that nearly every other year, Vancouver Jazz Festival mainstay Ken Pickering books the Orchestra back again with the addition of a new guest artist. Though opportunities are rare in terms of travel [which tends to be expensive for a group of fourteen people], concerts have happened in the past at Victo [where I caught them a while back with Rene Lussier], Toronto and in places as far as Portugal. Their music was always a tightly knit, semi-composed, semi-improvised rendition of adventurous big band music. Recorded two years ago in Vancouver, their latest offering "Pola" is centered around the many talents of pianist Marilyn Crispell. In fact, it's her poly-rhythmic, percussive keystrokes that are featured throughout the piece that are the highlight of many of the pieces. Thick clusters she is known for from many records in the past [especially solo ones] are evident everywhere. This doesn't necessarily mean Crispell overpowers any member of the orchestra. It's just that her style in itself is powerful enough to shake the walls. Kate Hammett-Vaughan's vocal chords are front and centre as well. Trumpets are especially strong this time around as both John Korsrud and Kevin Flaschuk duel out in constant full frontal attacks. Rod Murray's downright soothing trombone work is an antithesis to all the chaotic movements. Each movement is so different from the next and each one has a world of possibilities to offer. Running the gamut from big band music, improvisation, and finally stopping in the new music field, the Orchestra is once again alive with the world of possibilities. Whether provoking the listener into a situation or creating new events out of thin air, NOW Orchestra have once again risen to the task at hand.

- Tom Sekowski

http://www.gaz-eta.vivo.pl/gaz-eta/recenzje/gazeta.php?nr=46&id=s_5

NOW Orchestra & Marilyn Crispell: *Pola* (2004 [2005], Victo): NOW stands for New Orchestra Workshop, not that that helps much. Based in Vancouver under baritone saxophonist Coat Cooke's artistic direction, they've been around in some form or other since 1987 (or maybe 1977). With 14 musicians, including a vocalist used mostly for sound, they're a large, potentially ungainly, group, but I'm more struck by how they pull together. Their recordings seem to be tied to guest opportunities -- Barry Guy, René Lussier, George Lewis -- and Crispell fills that role here. In fact, she's worth concentrating on. Especially if you thought her ECM albums have been a bit tame lately, she gets plenty rough here. [B+(***)]

Jazz Prospecting (CG #10, Part 8) - Tom Hull

<http://www.tomhull.com/blog/archives/268-Jazz-Prospecting-CG-10,-Part-8.html>

NOW ORCHESTRA & MARILYN CRISPELL Pola (Les Disques Victo, VICTO 097): Das kanadische NOW Orchestra, geleitet vom Bariton- & Tenorsaxophonisten Coat Cooke, der auch mit ‚Broken Dreams‘, ‚Suffused with Blue Light‘ und den Miniaturen ‚Pola‘ und ‚March‘ der Hauptstückelieferant ist, gehört zu den schnittigen unter den Avantblaskapellen. Bei der ersten Begegnung noch Vehikel für Rene Lussiers Le Tour du Bloc-Eskapaden (Victo, 1995), ist das 13-köpfige Ensemble nun Gastgeber für die Pianistin Crispell, die mit ‚Yin Yang‘ eine der sechs Kompositionen beisteuerte, eine Meditation aus Haltetönen mit zartem Gitarrengefunkel, die ihren Gegensatz schon in sich trägt, aber auch die Kraft, wieder ins Gleichgewicht zurück zu finden. Geblieben ist bei NOW die Besetzung mit Dylan van der Schyff am Schlagzeug, dem Gitarristen Ron Samworth, der mit ‚M.C.‘ ein Stück für den Ehrengast komponiert hat, mit zwei Kontrabässen und auf der Blechseite sogar noch verstärktem Gebläse. Die Vokalistin Kate Hammett-Vaughan agiert dazwischen als Klangspritzer und giftiges Wollknäuel. Sie lässt sich selbst beim furiosen Getröte von ‚March‘ nicht vom Hosenbein schütteln. Furios bis zum Anschlag ist auch das M. C. gewidmete Holterdipolter mit einem Saxophon, das sich erst nach acht Minuten bändigend lässt, wobei die Ruhe nach dem Sturm verdächtig wie eine Ruhe vor dem Sturm grummelt. Und tatsächlich, bei den Aufräumversuchen tritt jemand dem Schoßhündchen des Orchesters auf die Pfote, mit verheerenden Folgen, bis endlich Madame Crispell persönlich auf den Tisch klopft. Über brummigen Brassbässen und Gewühle in den tiefen Registern des Pianos schimpft anschließend eine Posaune über die Störung ihrer Träume. Die Wogen glätten sich, das ganze Ensemble versinkt in Träumereien, auch die Posaune findet ihren Frieden zwischen Tag und Traum. Als ob sich ‚Broken Dreams‘ so einfach kitten ließen. ‚Suffused in Blue Light‘ springt als Pollock ab, verwandelt sich im Sprung in einen Yves Klein, aus dessen Blau ein Gedicht zu flüstern beginnt, monochrom in Brass gefasst, bis die Rückverwandlung in Pollock'sche Klangtropfen einsetzt.

Bad Alchemy
Rigobert Dittmann