



## RECORDINGS OF NOTE

# Festival sampler captures emotions

MUSIQUE ACTUELLE / Mark Miller

### DIX IMPROVISATIONS VICTORIAVILLE 1989

Various Artists

*Victo 09 (CD)*

The eighth Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville has been set this year for Oct. 4 to 8, and four of its concerts have been announced: Paul Bley, Tim Brady's Bradyworks, the Marilyn Crispell Quintet and France's Drame Musical Instantané. In the meantime, the Quebec festival has issued this sampler of 10 pieces from five of last year's concerts.

One, an excerpt from one of PIMAV '89's finest performances, the duo concert by Vancouver pianist Paul Plimley and Montreal bassist Lisle Ellis, captures clearly the strain, empathy and occasional ferocity that would bring them admiring notices from the international press in attendance.

The other performances represented here seemed less consequential in their entirety, but are rather stronger in their abbreviated form here. Violist LaDonna Smith and guitarist Davey Williams (USA), for example, come on like two cartoon characters nattering gibberish (*Taxi Round the Brim of a Hat*) and go out playing a forgetful Hillbilly blues (*Nightbird Shadow Blue*). German guitarist Hans Reichel's *Northern Monologue* has a "Green" version (suitably New Age-y) and a "Blue" version (lyrical in a Hendrix, *Wind Cries Mary* way).

New York's New Winds' new

music/new jazz is a generally dry mix, although Ned Rothenberg's alto saxophone solo *Crunchtime* seconds Plimley/Ellis's *The First and Last Feeling* for sustained tension. The record's closing trio of Maggie Nicols (voice, Britain), Lindsay Cooper (reeds, Britain) and Irene Schweizer (piano, Switzerland), seemed pleasantly low-key last October, but their *Nicosh* turns out to be full of little details, small dramas and fascinating indulgences.

### (SUITE)

#### Justine

*Ambiances Magnétiques AM 016*

Justine is the quartet of Montreal women formerly known as *Wondeur Brass*. With the name change seems to have come new confidence. There was nothing shy about *Wondeur Brass*, but Justine has filled (*Suite*) with brash ideas, hard, metallic sounds and urgent, often proclamatory vocals in support of a dozen songs that are in turn despairing, tender and sometimes word play simply for the sake of word play. The musical content remains fairly rudimentary — several pieces sound like subverted sixties rock — and Justine is still better at rising to the grand passions than gearing down to the little ones. There are a few deft instrumental touches and turns, though, and some extraordinary singing. Some out-of-tune singing, too: this does not change and, in the passionate Justine/Wondeur Brass scheme of things, probably does not matter either.