



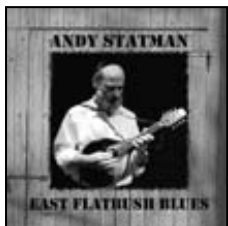
Some Trees
Daniel Levin Quartet (hatOLOGY)
 by Donald Elfman

Cellist Daniel Levin expands the compositional and improvisational palettes of modern jazz with a provocatively assembled group of adventurous musicians and works. Without a drummer, this group is able to rethink the dynamics and dialectic of a 'jazz' group and find new phrasing, spacing and modes of interaction. All of the players contribute vitally to this 're-mix': trumpeter Nate Wooley makes all of his effects - half-valving, dirty muting, etc. - work towards finding the optimal colors; vibist Matt Moran plays up the percussive aspects of his instrument and suggests Bobby Hutcherson of the '60s while also seeking new intervals and note placement; bassist Joe Morris is a solid foundation but also a very free, floating entity; and leader Levin uses formidable technique and an open mind to provide worlds of possibilities for the tunes, the musicians and for his own creative impulses. This is music that has roots in the "Third Stream" and in Mingus, Dolphy, Lacy and other pioneers of this new music. Like the trees in the John Ashbery poem from which Levin draws his inspiration, this music has the wild chaos of nature somehow centered in a sense of harmonious majesty.

Levin composed six of the eight tunes and they sparkle with the surprise of the new. The proceedings begin with his "It's For You" in which the instruments emerge as if out of some primal setting and offer themselves in bold, spiky bursts. That setting is never truly lost but each of the players is inventively seeking individual identities. They succeed and yet present a group identity as well. Just when we're beginning to get our bearings in the new landscape we hear a familiar organization of notes. It's the title tune from Eric Dolphy's seminal *Out to Lunch* session and it's startling in its structured anarchy. The quartet rings all sorts of new emphases on these changes before returning - in newly-spaced quarters - to the theme.

And so it goes - with Levin and his mates forging new relationships between themselves and their instruments. The closer - sans vibes - is a haunting and unpredictable reading of another new music standard, Ornette's "Morning Song". Like the other tunes on this beautiful collection, the improvisational and the compositional are fused into an organic whole.

For more information, visit www.hathut.com. Levin is at Tonic Jan. 15th and Barbès Jan. 24th with Joe Morris. See calendar.



East Flatbush Blues



Awakening from Above

Andy Statman (Shefa)

by Karen Hogg

There is no one quite like Andy Statman. A virtuoso clarinetist and mandolin player, he deftly navigates the seemingly incongruent musical landscapes of jazz,

bluegrass and Chassidic music.

On *East Flatbush Blues*, Statman lets his mandolin take center stage. A mix of traditional tunes and original compositions, part of the CD was recorded during Statman's weekly gig at the Greenwich Village Synagogue. Highlights include Statman's swinging version of the Bill Monroe classic "Bluegrass Stomp" and his rendition of Monroe's "Rawhide", which sounds like a cross between John Coltrane and the father of bluegrass himself. This hybrid of sounds, in Statman's able hands, makes perfect sense.

The original compositions reveal Statman's knack for melody and strong sense of rhythm. The beautiful, slightly frenzied "17" will have the listener dancing and marveling at how the mandolinist pulls off the intricate phrases. Named after the city in central Ukraine where thousands make a yearly pilgrimage, the lovely "Uman" pays homage to Statman's faith. The centerpiece of the CD would have to be "Old Joe Clark". A ten-minute tour de force, Statman, bassist Jim Whitney and percussionist Larry Eagle really go for it on this track.

Yet *East Flatbush Blues* only presents part of the picture. *Awakening from Above*, a collection of improvs and Chassidic melodies, finds Statman exploring adventurous sonic landscapes on the clarinet. This disc has an otherworldly, meditative quality to it. The opening track, "Yedid Nefesh/My Soul's Beloved", is a haunting composition by Rabbi Chaim Avraham Horowitz. For "Forshpiel/Improvisation", Statman recorded a mandolin drone and then overdubbed the clarinet. "Meron Improvisation", a duet with Eagle, showcases Statman at the height of his improvisational abilities.

It's fitting that these two CDs are presented as companions to each other. To appreciate fully Statman's genius, one must know the clarinetist, the mandolin picker and the man of faith.

For more information, visit andystatman.org. Statman is at Barbès Jan. 11th and Greenwich Village Synagogue Thursdays. See calendar and regular engagements.



Sense
Toby Koenigsberg Trio (Origin)
 by Terell Holmes

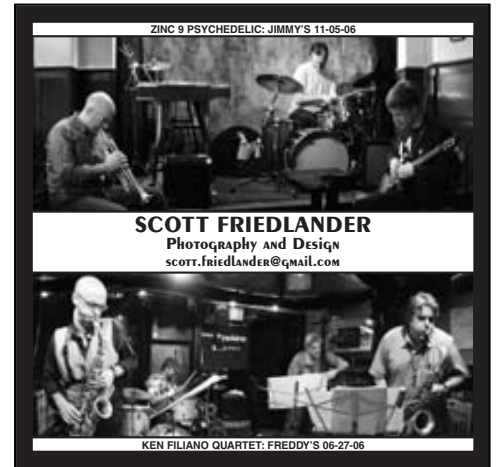
On its new CD *Sense*, the Toby Koenigsberg Trio approaches jazz from intriguing angles, bringing an exciting energy and edginess to originals and standards. The group's preferred organizing principle can be described as deconstruction by addition. Pianist Koenigsberg approaches Bud Powell's "Oblivion" by artfully inserting bits and pieces of the melody like someone assembling a jigsaw puzzle: an arpeggio here, a phrase there, until the picture is clear. Another Powell tune, "So Sorry Please", initially stumbles around like a drunk on a bender, but when it sobers up Koenigsberg's dynamic playing spurs drummer Jason Palmer and bassist Tyler Abbott on to greater heights.

The same scheme is in effect on "Stellaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!", a two-part invention based on "Stella By Starlight". The group nips mischievously at the fringes of the melody, dropping more and more hints of her identity. But just as she's about to be revealed the trio glides seamlessly into "My Foolish Heart", a ballad played so wonderfully straight that it almost seems out of place. And Koenigsberg's waltz "Variant Strain" shows his

propensity to use a repeating bass figure as the center of his compositions. Not coincidentally, this song contains what may be the best all around soloing on the disc, with Palmer's thrashing and Abbott's throbbing pizzicato.

With its humor, sense of style and flat-out chops, the Toby Koenigsberg Trio will engender comparisons to The Bad Plus. Both trios upend conventional song structures and expand contemporary definitions of jazz with an iconoclasm that's always been in the music's best tradition.

For more information, visit www.originarts.com. Koenigsberg is at Knitting Factory Jan. 5th and Saint Peter's Jan. 7th. See calendar.



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