Thomas Heberer's Clarino with Joachim Badenhorst and Pascal Niggenkemper
CD title: Klippe; released on Clean Feed Records, 2011

Source: Free Jazz Blog; review by Stef Gissels; September 21st 2011

I love the music of these guys. They sound fresh, inventive, clever, and utterly soulful and compelling. They are Thomas Heberer on trumpet, Joachim Badenhorst on clarinet, and Pascal Niggenkemper on bass.

The incredibly impressive percussion-less chamber music on this album is the result of Heberer's own "Cookbook" notation, by which improvised phrases are played, repeated and then reintroduced into an agreed structure. The approach requires astute listening and concentration, an aspect which is audible in the music, and adds a kind of dimension of caution and fragility. In contrast to many other musicians of their generation, they hardly ever resort to extended techniques, yet they use their instruments in the most "voiced" traditional way, but with the skills of virtuosi.

The overall sound as a result is calm, precise and subtle, sometimes grave, sometimes playful, often full of wonder, full of surprise. There is an incredible tenderness for the notes played, and intense feeling of cohesion despite the freedom the musicians have. Even if some of the pieces sound abstract at first listen, this is easily compensated by the sensitivity in each musician's timbral richness and the emotional delivery.

I could start describing the music, but as usual words fail me. You have to listen to it yourself . Trust me, you won't be disappointed, highly recommended!

Source: Jazz Wrap; review by Stephan Moore; September 12th 2011

Stunning. Simply stunning. I really stumbled into this record. It came about as a result of listening to the recent Equilibrium album, Walking Voices. I wanted to investigate some more material that Joachim Badenhorst had worked on and the new album from German born now New York resident, Thomas Heberer kept coming into view. Mainly from friends constantly telling me I need to check this guy out. And I finally decided I'd better take a listen. And what a surprise...

He studied under the great Manfred Schoof as well as plays in the collective Instant Composers Pool, led by Misha Mengelberg and Han Bennink. But aside from those illustrious backgrounds, he has a loaded catalogue of music that varies in themes (somber to cinematic to Moleaver-esque electronics) but is played with the highest of quality.

On his latest album, Klippe, Heberer delivers a chamber session that is moving as well as experimental in texture. The title refers to Heberer's childhood growing up near the Baltic Sea. The music strongly evokes a sense of space, long depths and far-reaching exploration.

"Törn" opens the disc with a delicate examination of space that has both a European classical element as well as encompassing aesthetics of free jazz. It slowly builds just for a moment and quickly recedes back into your consciousness. Heberer's performance is steady and emotionally effective.

Heberer's composition, "Mole" reminds me of early Enrico Rava. It's crisp and vibrant with sharp passages from both Badenhorst and Heberer. Niggenkemper adds an eerie backdrop with his soft touches on the bass strings. "Stapellauf" shows some of the affect Schoof's influence has had on Heberer. It swirls with frenetic and dark tones from both Niggenkemper and Heberer that pulsate and shift back and forth.

"Blanker Hans" and "Luv und Lee" both feature a mixture of improvised and structured chords that sees Bandenhorst and Heberer playing counterpoint while Niggenkemper rides up and down the scales with subtle abandon. "Einlaufbier" returns the listener to shore after a long journey. It's quiet and short but the final notes will linger in your memory well after the session ends.

Klippe is beautifully composed and executed. Stripped of additional instrumentation and giving his fellow musicians the room to roam and improvise, Thomas Heberer is becoming more than just one of the best kept secrets in the European and New York music scene. Highly recommended.