



Tootie's Tempo
Albert "Tootie" Heath/Ethan Iverson/Ben Street
 (Sunnyside)
 by Sean O'Connell

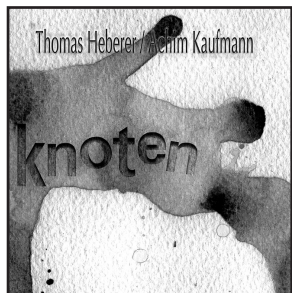
If there was one word to describe this album, it would be 'sweet'. Most musicians would probably kick a cat or write a regrettable Facebook post in order to regain a more muscular reputation but even the cover of *Tootie's Tempo* is undeniably sweet: pianist Ethan Iverson and bassist Ben Street flank drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath wearing bowties, suit jackets, campaign buttons and stubbly smiles.

Heath established himself as major mover in the jazz world long before Iverson and Street were born. He, along with brothers Percy (bass) and Jimmy (saxophone), made their collective mark on hundreds of essential jazz recordings starting in the '50s while Street and The Bad Plus' Iverson are in the midst of forging their own legacies. The younger duo shows a great and well-deserved reverence for their percussive leader in this new recording of old standards.

The band open by going way back with a tune dating to a dozen years before Heath was born - "The Charleston". Heath gives it a second-line pop as Iverson bounces the familiar chestnut with both hands. The trio dispenses an effortless swing at various speeds over 11 tracks, from a funereal "How Insensitive" to a simmering "Fire Waltz", with Heath to the fore on most every track. Iverson gets to stretch out on an easygoing stroll through "Stompin' At the Savoy", expanding and contracting across the keyboard with a jagged edge while Street shines on a duet with Heath on Neil Hefti's "Cute", carrying the melody with a sly briskness. Appropriately, Heath has the last word with the title track, an economic solo rendition of Frank Foster's "Shiny Stockings".

Despite the throwback aspect, cross-generational collaborations are invaluable both to preserving and progressing jazz and this trio has done a terrific job of making it fun. Let's hope there is more to come.

For more information, visit sunnysiderecords.com. This group is at *Village Vanguard* through Sep. 1st. See Calendar.



Knoten
Thomas Heberer/Achim Kaufmann (Red Toucan)
 by Ken Waxman

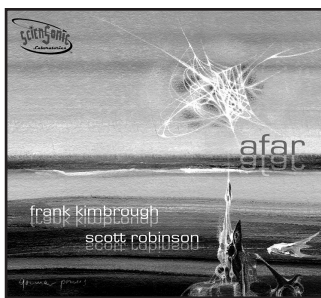
Following a 30-year gestation period, Achim Kaufmann (piano and prepared piano) and Thomas Heberer (trumpet and quarter-tone trumpet) have recorded their first duo disc. This program of high-quality improv was worth the wait but one wishes they had done so sooner. Teenage conservatory roommates and jobbers, Heberer and Kaufmann subsequently established themselves elsewhere. Today, the NYC-based Heberer is best known as a member of the ICP Orchestra while Kaufmann, now a Berliner, is occupied in many Continental ensembles, most notably with

Frank Gratkowski and Wilbert de Joode.

With all nine tracks credited to Kaufmann, Heberer or both, the selections are concerned with tryouts and tropes, not story-telling, the players uncovering novel ways to meld or contrast textures and timbres. This is facilitated with extensions available from quarter-tone trumpet and prepared piano. For instance, the piano string stops, strums and plucks gradually insinuate themselves within the jerky narrative of "Mâchoire" after Kaufmann's methodical note placement angles that way. In reaction, Heberer turns from open-horn note sprays to baby whines and dog yelping simulations without altering the midtempo melody. By mid-session both men put aside their more measured and hesitant byplay for erudite humor. For example, the pianist's warm voicing on "Großer Onkel" is interrupted by the trumpeter's razzing lip burbles before the two attain a staccato blend of key clipping and metal buzzing. In a similar fashion, Kaufmann's comping turns from soothing to jagged on "Ohrschuft", the better to push Heberer's legato phrasing into a collaborative theme.

Knoten translates as "knots" and the trumpeter's unfinished phrase at the finale of the closing "Kleimasker" suggests the two are prepared to untangle a few more knots on a future date.

For more information, visit www3.sympatico.ca/cactus.red/toucan. Heberer is at *Downtown Music Gallery* Sep. 1st. See Calendar.



Afar
Scott Robinson/Frank Kimbrough (ScienSonic)
 by George Kanzler

The 19 "completely improvised" duets on this recording vary in length from 11 seconds to 6 minutes and 28 seconds, with most falling in the two-plus to five-plus minute range. Scott Robinson plays a wide spectrum of saxophones, from soprano down to contrabass, tenor most favored, as well as alto clarinet, flugelhorn, theremin and tremolo (a zither-like stringed instrument with slide). Frank Kimbrough is on piano, both conventionally on keys and also occasionally inside on strings or with a "prepared" piano, on 14 tracks, but also plays electronic harpsichord, Hammond RT-3 organ, clavioline (an early electric piano/keyboard) and Farfisa organ. The approach of the musicians can be called avant garde but ranges stylistically from the lyric austerity of ECM improvised Euro-music to AACM free form. The duo explores not just the farther reaches of melody and harmony, but also the sonic boundaries of their instruments in improvised creations.

There's also an antic aspect to this CD, one tipped by the little label on the back cover that warns: "NOTE TO CONSUMER: This music may induce a sensation of being transported across great distances. If feeling persists, do not discontinue use." This is existential free jazz. The (all-one-word) titles scatter meaning clues around, ie, "Hither", "Thither" and "Yon" are dispersed/divided by such others as "Wend", "Advance" and "Whorl". On longer pieces such as "Vantage" and "Vista" Robinson pushes the range, tone and timbre of his tenor sax to extremes, from siren-high to grumbling-low, also bee-like buzzing on the latter, which also finds Kimbrough inside strumming piano strings. However, the former, as well as "Yon", are infectiously lyrical too, Robinson recalling Stan Getz or Warne Marsh, Kimbrough Bill

Evans or his own more mainstream self. Some tracks are oddly comic, like the contrabass sax and Farfisa organ "Advance", eerie tones suggesting old radio show *The Shadow*. Even eerier is "Celestria", a clavioline and theremin duet. Because of the ever-changing nature of the tracks and instrumental approaches, the album is a constant, surprising delight for the open-minded and open-eared listener.

For more information, visit sciensonic.net. Robinson is at *Jazz Standard* Sep. 2nd with *Mingus Big Band* and *Rubin Museum* Sep. 6th with *Donny McCaslin*. Kimbrough is at *Jazz Standard* Sep. 13th-14th, *Juilliard School* Sep. 17th and *55Bar* Sep. 27th with *Kendra Shank*. See Calendar.

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