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JAZZ AND IMPROVISED

Something In The Air - Outstanding and Unusual Boxed Sets

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As the availability of music on different media continues to proliferate, the focus of the durable box set has become equally diverse. No longer does a multi-disc collection have to be definitive or far-ranging. As a matter of fact some of the best, like the ones discussed here, concentrate on certain sequences in an artist's career.

(.....)

More chronologically limited, but even more spectacular in probing the boundaries of a jazz formation is **Die Kunst des Trio 1-5 (BMC Records BMC CD 196 bmcrecords.hu)**. During the course of five CDs and a bonus DVD, Cologne-based pianist **Hans Lüdemann** works through programs involving five unique bass and drum teams. Able to express high-energy complexity and florid impressionism with the same finesse, Lüdemann's trios showcase original



compositions plus Hanns Eisler ballads from the latter's Hollywood period. All 36 tracks, recorded at the same location, are performed acoustically aside from the sets with electric bass and percussion.

Sophisticated in mining perceptive emotions with both acoustic and electronic keyboards, *Rhythm Magic* is Lüdemann's weakest program. That's because bass guitar sluices, percussion patter and staccato key flourishes excite only the tapping foot rather than the thinking brain. Conversely, *Chiffre*, featuring bassist/cellist Henning Sieverts plus percussionist Eric Shaefer, confirms the adage that the best is often left for last. Able to make the virtual piano as sensitive to cerebral explorations as the real McCoy, Lüdemann creatively exposes the tunes' reflective innards on CD5. Slow paced *Doux* for example unites keyboard cascades with piercing multi-string actions that could come from a viola da gamba. Meanwhile the climatic minutes of *Verioren* that result from the pianist's near-boogie-woogie patterning are cannily set up with bell peals and impressionistic multi-string vibrations at the top. This is the most impressive trio music, but there's also much to be said for the pianist's interaction with bassist Robert Landfermann and drummer Jonas Burgwinkel plus bassist Sébastien Boisseau and drummer Dejan Terzic. The first mixes kinetic piano lines, drum pumps and quirky bass voicing to extend the classic piano trio to include European tropes such as suggestions of baroque stylings plus electronic add-ons. Even better is the Boisseau-Terzic meeting. Dramatic and cerebral, sturdy bass lines and clattering drums aid the pianist's careful pacing of particular themes. Paradoxically this strategy is impressive on *Über den Selbstmord/Das ist gefährlich* where Lüdemann sutures harmonic swing onto the Eisler song which starts the track. This type of transformative alchemy is extended throughout the nine tunes that make up Eisler's *Exile*. Seconded by bassist Dieter Manderscheid and percussionist Christian Thomé, the pianist never neglects the romantic yearnings which inhabit the German composer's original intent. At the same time he invests each track with sinewy swing.