

Kerouac

Michael Jaeger | Intakt Records (2010)

Allaboutjazz

By Nic Jones

The quartet of Jaeger, pianist Vincent Membrez, bassist Luca Sisera and drummer Norbert Pfammatter has been together for five years and the depth of playing experience that implies is evident in this release. The balance of the new and the familiar is rarely struck with such precision as this ensemble manages, but the presence of guests [Greg Osby](#) and [Philipp Schaufelberger](#) adds another dimension to the creative tension. Both men prove themselves adept at blending with the quartet's working methods and the resulting music is compelling for all of the ways in which it flirts with tradition.

"Daha" is a case in point. Membrez teases near-dead sounds out of his prepared piano in a manner Schaufelberger coalesces with. Irregular intervals, underscored by the stealth the group proceeds with, serve to heighten the tension, as does Pfammatter's galumphing contribution. Osby sings through his alto sax in his inimitably dry, acidic way, hinting at all sorts of rhythmic implications even while he gives himself over to the collective musical identity.

"Outdoors" is the sound of coalescence and is closer to something unique than a lot of the music out there. Deep listening is the only term that realistically encompasses what's going down here, although the underlying nature of the music is such that the impetus comes as if by second nature. As a result, the proceedings are shot through with a series of underlying tensions born of the episodic nature of the music. The unruffled tenor sax-guitar unisons on "Flexible" belie the tension lying beneath. Here progress is marked more overtly by momentum derived largely from Membrez's conventional piano. It's true to say that he has a vocabulary of his own, which is no mean feat considering the territory the music covers, and the same is true of Jaeger's tenor sax, which, given the ubiquity that instrument now has in improvised music circles, is perhaps an even greater feat of imagination.

"Schwarzes Eis" is frustrating in its brevity because it's the most overt example of something taken free in the whole program. All five players prove themselves conversant in the language and the quickness of thought and action that perennially makes free playing so compelling, but after two and a half minutes the episode is over.

The compositional method evident on "Outdoors" is present too on "Frei Funf" although silence takes on a far greater role in the building of a collective dynamic. The result is as compelling as anything here, albeit in a manner that's unique to the piece itself.

Track listing: Tanz; Goldfaden; Schwarzes Eis; Daha; Flexible; Frei Funf; Kluss; Outdoors.