

The Boomerang

New reissues and archive releases

Creative Music Studio

Archive Selections Vol 1

Innova 3×CD

"Our thinking mind is much too slow for music," pianist and vibraphone player Karl Berger observed, in conversation with Howard Mandel (see *The Wire* 351). Music's time, translated from synaptic flash into articulated sound, was evidently a key issue for visitors to the Creative Music Studio in Woodstock, New York, which Berger and singer Ingrid Sertso established during the early 1970s, with enthusiastic support from Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry. This release, apparently the first in a series tapping into the CMS archive, is divided equally between small group encounters, orchestral performances and music from a world beyond the Western cultural mainstream.

Four marvellous improvisations by drummer Ed Blackwell and saxophonist Charles Brackeen open the collection. In their fluency, clarity, nuance and supple dynamism they are perfect illustrations of Berger's point. Other small group performances feature Berger and Sertso with legendary bassist David Izenzon; violinist Leroy Jenkins in elegantly intuitive combination with guitarist James Emery; and an intense piano dialogue between Frederic Rzewski and Ursula Oppens. CMS was a relaxed meeting place for kindred spirits, but this is rigorously focused, at times fiercely concentrated music.

On the second disc, the assembled improvisors of The CMS Orchestra get raunchy and blue with trumpeter Olu Dara in the role of composer-soloist; they piece together colourful, decorative mosaics with saxophonist Oliver Lake; and provide a frame and backdrop for Roscoe Mitchell's abstract and angular conversation with trombonist Garrett List. On the third disc, in sessions reverberating with Don Cherry's legacy, Turkish reedsman Ismet Siral, Brazilian percussionist Nana Vasconcelos and Gambian kora maestro Foday Suso send fresh accents and metrical convolutions spinning through the Woodstock air. If necessary, put your thinking mind on hold, but be sure to catch this glimpse into an genuinely exploratory and still exhilarating musical gathering.

Julian Cowley

Jean Dubuffet & İlhan Mimaröğlü

Musiques Pour Coucou Bazar

Sub Rosa 2×CD

"We expect art to uproot us, to unhinge doors," wrote Jean Dubuffet in 1963. It was this expectation that fired his passion for art made by children, asylum inmates, spirit mediums and other outsiders from the mainstream, untainted by formal training and professional discipline. His own art brut practices sought to bypass aesthetic convention and collective approval, evading the constraints and dilutions of cultural orthodoxy. *Coucou Bazar* was an early 1970s

project, an attempt to bring his painted figures to life within a choreographed stage show. The music by Turkish composer İlhan Mimaröğlü that accompanied its initial presentations in New York and Paris now resurfaces on the first of these two CDs.

In May 1964 Mimaröğlü had been inspired by a Dubuffet drawing to compose *Bowery Bum*, a wonderfully chewy musique concrète sketch, with a rubber band as its source. By the time of *Coucou Bazar* Mimaröğlü, a Columbia University trained composer and musicologist, had also become an insider at Atlantic Records. Despite its enjoyably effervescent, chattering and scrawly surface, his electronic composition is underpinned by an outlook that doesn't entirely fit with Dubuffet's commitment to rawness.

For a 1978 revival in Turin, Dubuffet opted to draw instead upon the small archive of his own "slovenly and dirty" music. Montaged on tape, yet entirely improvised, these spontaneous compositions feature on the second CD. Some were recorded in 1961; some were made during 1973–74. They use Dubuffet's voice, violin, piano, percussion instruments, whistles and assorted unidentifiable sounding objects. They are clotted and doughy, like oil paint clumped on canvas, or spindly and agitated like inky scratching or abstractions in wire. Often murky and splendidly messy, Dubuffet's music for *Coucou Bazar* seems to feed, as he wished, directly from the "cosmic hubbub".

Julian Cowley

Kenny Graham

The Small World Of Sammy Lee

Trunk CD

Film maker Ken Hughes, who went on to direct *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, made *The Small World Of Sammy Lee* in 1963. Set on the seedy streets of London's Soho, it starred Anthony Newley as a nightclub host in debt and in danger. The music was entrusted to Kenny Graham, a sax, clarinet and flute player remembered now mainly for his Afro-Cubists group. A wistful melody, played solo at first by incongruously pastoral flute, sets the scene of Soho at dawn. It's the first of 16 deftly scored chamber jazz vignettes, assembled into a 24 minute suite.

Graham was an imaginative composer and arranger, deeply inspired by Duke Ellington's subtlety and sophistication. His contribution to the film plays down musical clichés of low life action and early 60s sleaze and focuses on states of mind and shades of emotion. Vibes and baritone sax play prominent roles, a combination popularised in British jazz at that time by a fine group co-led by Bill Le Sage and Ronnie Ross, but here central to the music's psychological colouration. No musicians are listed, but a little research reveals some of the key names: Joe Temperley on baritone, Coleridge Goode on double bass,

Ken Gordon on drums and probably Alan Branscombe on vibes. An enjoyable retrieval that sounds surprisingly fresh.

Julian Cowley

Happy Machine: Standard Music

Library 1970–2010

Various

Public Information DL/2×LP

One resounding moment in the history of British electronic music is captured in a scene from Hammer's updated vampire movie, *Dracula AD 1972*. A bunch of London's Kings Road teens try to raise the devil in a deconsecrated church by playing "Black Mass: Electric Storm In Hell" from the first White Noise album. As if to acknowledge the participation of BBC Radiophonic Workshop renegades Delia Derbyshire and Brian Hodgson in this pioneering LP, the kids play a reel-to-reel tape of the track rather than the vinyl. At the height of the ritual the tape suddenly runs out, but the unearthly sounds continue as the film's soundtrack, composed by former Manfred Mann multi-instrumentalist Mike Vickers, kicks in with a wild mix of echoing wails and feedback.

The transition between formats – tape, vinyl and movie soundtrack – constitutes a large part of library music's secret appeal. It is a migrant form, belonging everywhere and nowhere at the same time. Public Information's trawl through the Standard Music Library, established in 1968 by music publisher David Platz and London Weekend Television, emphasises this free play of form and content by connecting Brian Hodgson with Mike Vickers once again. Represented by individual compositions that never quite touch, they set the mood for the entire collection – Hodgson's "Cathedral In Space" and "The Craters Of Mars" are glacial and dreamlike where Vickers's "Curve Of The Wind" and "In The Wind" have a neat pop bounce to them. Vickers also returns to more discordant reverberations on "Headful Of Birds", which might easily be mistaken for a Hodgson composition on a first hearing. Library music, like all easy listening, is created with a definite but unspecified purpose – to accompany some activity that has yet to occur. Sometimes the personal imprint of its creator fades away. While the tracks contained on this two disc set blend into each other in a near faultless sequence, this effect is often achieved by featuring what might seem a composer's least representative work. John Keating's two contributions, for example, are stripped down, purely electronic pieces without his usual orchestral flash and excess; similarly "Eary Feary" reveals Beatles producer George Martin busily layering creepy effects with an analogue synth and not much else.

Other surprises include former Banshee and Adam Ant collaborator Marco Pirroni's shuffling ambient guitars on "Mystery Stomp B", plus a couple of short electronic dance pieces from John Kongos, whose glam rock hit "He's Gonna Step On You Again"

was later transformed by Happy Mondays into the acid house-era anthem "Step On". Nor is it a stretch to connect electronic library music of the 1970s with the electronica of today. Reaching across the four decades covered by this compilation are the unsettling insistent loops and beats of "In The Shadows" by Chris McCormack, whose composer credit has turned up on a range of techno and house releases. What were once easy listening's enthusiasms for the future are now the uneasy memories haunting today's haunted dancefloors. Be careful where you step.

Ken Hollings

Billy Jenkins

The Semi-Detached Suburban Home

(Music For Low Strung Guitar)

VOTP DL

This collection, recorded in the 1990s but unreleased until now, is a far cry from Billy Jenkins the comedy showman, barking and bellowing his way through a free blues set like a man escaping from a skip. This is Jenkins simply playing a steel strung acoustic guitar. No vocals, no chewing the scenery, just thoughtful miniatures. The average length of these 30 pieces is under 90 seconds. This could turn out to be Jenkins's best-loved album.

His guitar has a rich, well recorded sound, but sounds awkward to play. There's an element of Marc Ribot's preference for a cussed instrument that makes the player sweat in the search for beauty. The album shares its tenderness with Derek Bailey's *Ballads*, but Jenkins isn't tackling jazz standards, just improvising in a lyrical way – interrupted by scuffling noise episodes, sure, but even these are cunningly integrated rather than employed to slap the listener in the face. Throughout, Jenkins plays with the listener in mind. His skewed take on the blues informs certain moments, but his range is broader: "Adjusting The Aerial" is like a pretty Neapolitan song; "Ancient Antimacassar" oozes sullen flamenco menace; and several tracks have a melodic simplicity, like a half-remembered song. These are suburban hymns of despair for Bromley pilgrims.

Like Neil Young, Jenkins is currently disillusioned with digital music. He is also disappointed that hardworking instrumentalists seem to be shoved aside by electronic devices. He has diversified into working as an officiant at humanist funerals. What kind of music will he produce from his present state of mind? Meanwhile this is an emotional album, a heartfelt statement.

Clive Bell

Ingram Marshall

Fog Tropes/Gradual Requiem

Arc Light Editions DL/LP

Fog Tropes/Gradual Requiem brings together the two works by US composer Ingram Marshall. A student of Vladimir