

## CD REVIEW

**ARTIST:** CREATIVE MUSIC STUDIO  
**TITLE:** ARCHIVE SELECTIONS, VOL. 1  
**LABEL:** INNOVA 805

**TUNES:** DISC ONE: UNTITLED 1-4\* / MAY DAY+ / CHILD OF THE NIGHT+ / I AM A LEAF FOR TODAY+ / 7INC~ / ASHIATA# / OKIDANOKH#. 58:53.

\*ED BLACKWELL (D), CHARLES BRACKEEN (SS, TS), NOVEMBER 22, 1980.

+DAVID IZENZON (B), INGRID SERTSO (VCL), KARL BERGER (P, VIB), APRIL 30, 1977. ~FREDERIC RZEWSKI (P), URSULA OPPENS (P). OCTOBER 1978. #LEROY JENKINS (VLN), JAMES EMERY (G). APRIL 23, 1977.

DISC TWO: UNTITLED 1-3\* / CMS SCENE 1-3+ / TWO BY TWO+ / UNTITLED. 59:54.

\*OLU DARA (TPT, HCA), CMS PARTICIPANTS. 1981. +OLIVER LAKE (AS, FLT), MICHAEL GREGORY (G), JAMES HARVEY (TBN), CMS PARTICIPANTS. 1976 AND 1979. #ROSCOE MITCHELL (REEDS), GARRETT LIST (TBN), CMS PARTICIPANTS. 1977.

DISC THREE: OY\* / UNTITLED\* / MERDEVIN\* / CALL AND RESPONSE+ / BERIMBAU SOLO+ / KUUMBA SORA# / DEMBA TENKEREN# / DISCO GATE#. 58:55.

**PERSONNEL:** \*Ismet Siral (ney, flt, ss), Steve Gorn (bansuri flt), CMS participants. July 1980. +Nana Vasconcelos (vcl, berimbau), CMS participants. July 1979. #Foday Suso (kora), Adam Rudolph (perc), Hamid Drake (d), John Marsh (b). 1980. All performances, Woodstock, NY.

What an absolute treat this one is. The fabled Woodstock, New York, institution CMS, which in the 1970s was a place for intensive musical collaboration and study once likened to an “alternative ashram,” has only rarely had recordings of its activities available to the public. The good people at Innova have charged out of the gates with this 3-disc treasure, tantalizingly named the first volume in an ongoing series. The music is by and large quite successful, featuring participants who are immediately recognizable to readers as well as numerous unsung improvisers. With extensive liners and documentation, and not overall marred by the release’s occasionally inconsistent recording quality, this is a treasure trove.

The first disc is devoted to “Small Groups.” A tart duo between Charles Brackeen and Ed Blackwell gets things started, opening with spacious and avian soprano set against Blackwell’s always amazing rhythmic patterns, that just plain rock. After a folkish second piece, they unveil a craggy, rapidly stair-stepping theme that vaguely recalls Lake’s “Zaki” but evolves into a more Ornette-ish performance. Izenzon’s solos are very robust and occasionally quizzical, as when he mimics knocks on a door and answers gruffly “go away, I’m practicing.” It’s a great opportunity to hear this distinctive bassist unfettered. When he’s joined by Sertso and Berger, things get just a shade more conventionally. There’s a bit of an Annette Peacock feel to Sertso’s vocals (elongated, slightly breathy), and Berger provides spacious and thoughtful commentary, especially his vibes on the abstract, whalesong-like “I Am a Leaf for Today.” The bracing, complex

piano duo is a real archival find, and the two “classical” musicians (each of whom has well-known and lengthy associations with improvisers’ collectives) create some seriously dynamic music. And the duos for Jenkins and Emery are exquisite, filled with real lyricism, lush lines and chords, and palpable empathy.


The second disc is orchestral, and most of the (uncredited) participants acquit themselves pretty well throughout. These kinds of workshop performances reflect the pedagogical and communitarian impulses of the 1970s fully, but the music is pretty good on its own merits. Olu Dara is in a sassy mood on the bluesy “Untitled 1,” with harmonica, vocals, and barrelhouse piano. “Untitled 2” lingers for a time in droning texturalism before sprinting forward. And there’s a kind of stuttering proto-funk on “Untitled 3,” with some grooving keys and spring-loaded guitar too. The four brief pieces with Lake and his frequent playing partner Michael Gregory are really satisfying. They get into a bit of a lurching groove on the first piece, followed by a spaciouly abstract number, concluding their ensemble work with a rousing, swaggering street-dance chock full of great horn section work (especially the righteous trombone solo!). The large ensemble disc is capped off by Mitchell at his most 1970s quizzical, darting and cawing and poking from the thick textural hive. Things boil down until there eventually just a duo for him and List, their music wrought of super-spare pointillism and squeak.

The third disc is characterized by serious jamming, with some blazing pieces led by Siral and Gorn (“Oy” has a wailing guitar solo that somehow works really well in the otherwise earthy textures). The music is shaggy in the right degree, and the participatory vocals and whistles are fitting overall. The untitled percussion and flute piece bears a strong resemblance to Codona, as does “Merdevin.” Speaking of that well-loved trio, Nana Vasconcelos’ solo piece is a pleasure. The workshop quality of the “Call & Response” piece is similarly infectious, reminding of some of the stuff Don Cherry used to get up to in his late 1960s and 1970s performances. One of the greatest pleasures is the opportunity to hear archival stuff from Suso’s Mandingo Griot Society, with funky interaction between Drake and Marsh’s electric bass, and loads of zesty kora and percussion. Best is the brisk, danceable “Demba,” but the mid-tempo “Disco Gate” features the most expressive work from Suso, and a winning explanation of his instrument’s lineage to the audience. It’s a fine conclusion to this release, one I imagine most readers will enjoy considerably.

Jason Bivins

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