



REVIEWS OF RECORDINGS

very interesting melodic concept in his solos. Hess's solo closes out the tune. The thematic materials of the piece are relatively simple but effective and the transitions between the solos add to sustaining the interest of the performance. Ken Filiano has a particularly good solo on "High St". He takes his solo with the bow and gets his bass to sing. Hess and Smoker follow with an engaging duo in which drummer Damon Short eventually engages. This leads to a really good drum solo by Short that is accompanied by short interjections from the horns. In this piece Mr. Hess, again, takes his music beyond more common free jazz performance practice and gives his sidemen ideas to develop.

"Boson" is, to this listener, in an AB form. The "A" sections are slow and mournful, while the "B" sections move into a loose, medium tempo swing groove. Mr. Hess develops this very simple structure in the solos, starting his solo with an "A" section feel that is enhanced by Filiano's bowed bass. This gives way to a more spirited four way collective improvisation. What follows is a contemplative and quirky solo by Smoker with a transformed rhythm section accompaniment that includes Short's use of mallets on his drums and cymbals. "Boson" is a good example of Mr. Hess's ability, compositionally, to sustain interest and diversity in his music. Of course, it must also be said that his band mates understand his concepts and are able to successfully realize them.

"Kyudo for Ken" closes the album. The theme is stated in a unison fashion by the horns and the bowed bass. Again we are treated to an inventive bowed solo by Filiano, ably and sensitively accompanied by Damon Short on the drum kit. This one also features Hess and Smoker in solo and duo roles.

This is a worthwhile album for listeners who have an interest in creative improvised music. It contains what is good in this genre of music without the histrionics that lesser performers would bring to the music. Hess is a gifted and thoughtful composer whose music should be heard and supported.

Reuben Hoch

THE CHASSIDIC JAZZ PROJECT LIVE – RH Factor Records. 7588 Stockton Terrace, Boca Raton, FL 33433. www.chassidicjazz.com. *Avinu Malkeinu, Keli Atoh, Adon Olam Medley, Shalom Aleichem**, *Shabbat Shalom**, *Bilvavi, Crackow Nigun*

PERSONNEL: Reuben Hoch (drums); Felipe Lamoglia (tenor & soprano saxophones); Don Friedman (piano)*; Tom Lippincott (guitars); Marie Randel (viola, violin); Barbara Corcillo (cello); Dan Feiszli (bass); Bobby Thomas Jr. (percussion)

By Bill Donaldson



Drummer Reuben Hoch has considered his own identity, and the identity of the Jewish people over the span of thousands of years, to develop a subgenre of music that he calls "Chassidic jazz." Not an already established style of jazz like bebop and not a widely accepted expression of Jewish celebration or worship, Chassidic jazz instead adopts some defining characteristics from each. So, tenor saxophonist Felipe Lamoglia's urgency on "Keli Atoh" is suggestive of the spirit of jazz saxophonists who preceded him, like Charles Lloyd or Gato Barbieri. On the other hand, Don Friedman—who has appeared on some of the most important recordings in jazz, like *Candid Dolphy* and *Discovery! The Charles Lloyd Quartet* (pre-Keith Jarrett) — combines the cultural allusions of "Shalom Aleichem," a florid solo interpretation of the traditional song heralding the Sabbath, with some of the elements of jazz for deeper harmonic enrichment than the traditional version offers.

Other than the two tracks on which Friedman appears, the music of the Chassidic Jazz Project contains multiple movements and varied instrumentation. For instance, "Avinu Malkeinu" commences with the softness of Tom Lippincott's evocation of the song's theme, as if muffled, while Hoch and Bobby Thomas, Jr. color it with tambourine, wind chimes, cymbal crashes and bass drum rolls. But that doesn't last long, as if Lippincott's work were a preamble to the main event. For, after 2 ½ minutes into the song, Lamoglia fulfills the suggestiveness of the introduction with a fiery development of the five-note theme over the 12/8 movement of Hoch's drums and Dan Feiszli's bass. Or, "Adon Olam Medley," which restates the concluding prayer of the Sabbath service, contains the initial motive built upon the two-note stringed pattern, gradually increasing in intensity, until it builds after a pause into Lippincott's rubato lead-in to the affecting song that unfolds with glowing simplicity. And even then, Hoch's arrangement leads into a freer section played by Lamoglia and backed by an infectious percussiveness, suggestive of a carnival.

The journey that led Hoch to the creation of the Chassidic Jazz Project is notable in itself. Like many other musicians, Hoch, after spending the early years of his musical career in the New York jazz scene, eventually sought his own truth within himself. That truth involved his childhood

experiences in a New York synagogue, where he first heard some of the haunting melodies included on *The Chassidic Jazz Project Live*. Even after performing with the likes of Dave Liebman, Leni Stern and Greg Osby, the music of Hoch's religious upbringing stayed with him, leading to his four years of residency in Tel Aviv. Hoch's lifetime of experiences finally came together with the creation of the Chassidic Jazz Project, and especially with its performance in Broward County, Florida, where the CD was recorded.

Unapologetically liturgical, the music of the Chassidic Jazz Project instead celebrates the music of Jewish religious observances with the improvisational freedom of jazz, energized by Hoch's drumming. Indeed, many of the tracks are distinguished by the incorporation of unconventional meters, which drive the tunes with swirling and arresting movement.

To make sure that his audience didn't miss the moral of the narratives within the music, Hoch introduces "Crackow Nigun" with a story about Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach's visit to a synagogue in Krakow, Poland. Suddenly, the supernatural nature of the music becomes known because the Rabbi meets thousands of souls from the Holocaust there, whose mission is to oversee and protect all of their descendants from a similar fate. And as Rabbi Shlomo suggests building a bridge to Jerusalem, Hoch tells the audience that the tempo of the music to accompany the journey changed from a slow march to a fast dance. Which leads into *The Chassidic Jazz Project's* version of "Crackow Nigun," mixing the percussiveness of "Brazil" with the world music pulse of *Weather Report*. Not only is Hoch's presentation of "Crackow Nigun" appropriate for the audience, but also it's thrilling, tying together the themes of the entire evening.

A lifetime in the making, *The Chassidic Jazz Project Live* fulfills the personal vision of Reuben Hoch. By its very nature, the music is quite unlike that of any other CD you'll hear in this or any other year.

Hinda Hoffman

MOON AND SAND--HH 56900 (self-produced; released 2000). Hinda Hoffman, 1200 W. Chase, Suite 3A, Chicago, IL 60626. Tel.: 773-508-0912. *Wonder Why; Deep Purple; Whisper Not; The Lamp Is Low; medley: Lotus Blossom/A Flower Is A Lovable Thing; Our Day Will Come; Day Dream; Comes Love; Dreamer; Day By Day; I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good); Peel Me A Grape; Moon And Sand; Gee Baby, Ain't I Good To You.* (67:29)

PERSONNEL: Hinda Hoffman, vocals; Dennis Luxion, Ron Perrillo, piano; Dennis Carroll, bass; George Fludas, drums.

By Jazz Officer Spaak