



**The Quartet (Otoroku)
Hurricane (Old Heaven Books)
Peter Brötzmann
by John Sharpe**

Death has done little to silence Peter Brötzmann (1941-2023): three years after the German reedman's passing on Jun. 22 at age 82, albums still arrive, charged with the visceral impact that made him one of improvised music's great disrupters. Although his playing settled into recognizable ways in later years, its potency retained the ability to shock, engage and most importantly, energize his partners. Live, onstage, was the most rewarding setting in which to encounter Brötzmann, and though that is no longer an option, there are many concert recordings, like these two, which give a strong flavor.

The Quartet documents Brötzmann's last-ever performances in a two-day residency at London's Café OTO in February 2023. This writer was lucky enough to be there on the first night and still remember physically recoiling in my seat from his opening salvo. Fair to say then that he had lost none of his power, in spite of a recent bout of pneumonia. But as the four sets (comprising over two hours of music) show, while unable to sustain such ferocity at length, he compensates by leaning into the tender introspection that has long been part of his expression, yet in its present fragility is perhaps even more affecting. And, of course, his

bandmates take up any slack. Alongside Brötzmann, reuniting a quartet dormant since 2016, are Chicagoan Jason Adasiewicz (vibraphone) and the English pair of John Edwards (bass) and Steve Noble (drums). They integrate driving beats and timbral adventure into a dynamic, constantly flexing architecture that affords the leader both launchpad and respite. As ever, he tempers the fire-breathing, running variants on a favorite tune, codified as "Master of a Small House" on *Tales Out Of Time* (hatOLOGY, 2004), and the band even slips briefly into a slow Wuppertal blues on the final night. Electrifying at the time. Incredibly poignant in retrospect.

In 2015, Brötzmann along with Adasiewicz, visited China in the company of Japanese percussionist Sabu Toyozumi, another colleague with a long, shared history. *Hurricane* captures their appearance at the OCT-LOFT Festival in Shenzhen during their week-long tour. The leader's vibrato-laden banshee wail, whether on alto or tenor, clarinet or tarogato, permeates the four pieces in this 42-minute set. Once again, those familiar melodic contours surface, worried at and abraded until they ascend into a heart-rending cry. With the vibraphone furnishing part color and part cadence, and the drums offering bursts of pulsation, Adasiewicz and Toyozumi interlock to create a sparsely rhythmic carpet that buoys up equally Brötzmann's fury and bathos. The expansive "Hurricane 1", which waxes alternately brusque and plaintive, stands among the reedman's finest moments of his latter-day playing, while the gentle clarinet feature, "Hurricane 2", contrasts with the full-pelt intensity of the last two tracks. On the encore, "Hurricane 4", Brötzmann paraphrases Max Roach and Oscar Brown Jr.'s "Driva Man" from the classic *We Insist! (Freedom Now Suite)*. It affirms a connection to the jazz canon that was always there for those willing to listen.

For more info visit otoroku.bandcamp.com and oldheavenbooks.bandcamp.com



**Feed the Fire
Hannah Marks (Endectomorph Music)
by Matty Bannond**

This *Feed the Fire* quartet is in a scramble to get somewhere quick—but is oddly laid back about where it winds up. Start and end points are beside the point for bassist-composer Hannah Marks. Her music prioritizes what happens between those positions. It spins in circles, zips along tangents and lingers on vamps with unshakable belief that wherever it may land is the right place. Marks' path through life began in Des Moines, IA. After stations at the Jacobs School of Music and New England Conservatory, she relocated to NYC in 2019.

Pianist Jason Moran serves as producer for this, Marks' second album, a ten-track release, which includes fellow Big Apple associates Nathan Reising (alto), Lex Korten (piano) and Steven Crammer (drums). The bassist remembers hearing Moran perform this record's Geri Allen-penned title tune, shortly after her move back to NYC. She recalls Moran's uninhibited performance, which transformed the bassist's musical concept and is reflected in the busy melodic shapes and helixing rhythms that characterize much of the album. Straight-ahead approaches are sprinkled into the mix, too. There are blue notes and traded solos on "When

Day Becomes Night", with sharp, angled piano lines and frequent changes of velocity. "On the Sunnier Side of the Pool" leans on the cheerful Jimmy McHugh-Dorothy Fields swing standard of a similar name, blending new arrangements with old compositional material. For the final track, "Fan Club", Korten switches to Fender Rhodes and slips into circular patterns beneath Reising's staccato saxophone solo, creating a funky, frisky and Brecker Brothers-ish piece.

Feed the Fire zigzags from one jazz neighborhood to the next without ever setting up camp. As a composer and arranger, Marks' unpredictable style nail-guns her listeners to the edge of their seats. The music gets somewhere quickly, then gets somewhere else just as fast—but it always keeps its cool.

For more info visit endectomorph.com. The album release concert is at The Jazz Gallery Jun. 27. See Calendar.



**Matter
Fred Frith/Mariá Portugal (Intakt)
by Fred Bouchard**

Encapsulating the exploits of legendary guitar innovator Fred Frith, consider these epigrammatic notes: with Henry Cow ('70s), sped-up, quick-cut, slap-downs of mid Zappa-era; fully-prepared, tinkering *Guitar Solos I, II* (1974-76) with speed/slow, dubs, retunes, fades ghost notes up/out; *Gravity* (1980) and its Residents' zany, loopy, Balkan-eyed art rock via Art Bears' mannerly, chamberly reeds, plectra strings. Frith's restless nano-creativity can be tracked as he refits axes, invents tools, produces tons over the course of 400+ albums with fellow co-conspirators including Brian Eno, Iva Bittová, Lol Coxhill, John Zorn and others.

Here's Frith, 77, on his dozenth album since 2009 for Zurich-based Intakt (celebrating 40 adventuresome years), going head-to-hand with Brazilian percussionist Mariá Portugal at Köln's The Loft. Adept at pop, free improv and MPB, Portugal (who has worked with Maggie Nicols, Joe McPhee, Anthony Braxton, Tomeka Reid) proves an adept, experimental partner. While pure audio of their interactions—intimate, intuitive—induces a trance-like, meditative state, it also evokes a rare itch to peek at precisely how barefoot Frith wields his trade-tool kit-bag: violin + bow? tin cup? ashtray? shoebrush? chopsticks? kebab skewer? pie-plate? Though the duo here is less nuanced than their live dates, Portugal goes pit-for-pat on drumkit with hands, sticks, mallets, brushes, bottle-cap shekere. On "Things Considered", the ice crystal feedback and wavy organ skitter under legato ghost voices as flat hands strum lap-top guitar. The gong waves of "See-Through Blind" build a staccato march with hard mallets that morphs into a kinetic strum. "Looking Up" matches gnarly licks with more mallets. On "O tempo e sua segura" ("Dry Times" is a sketchy Brazilian translation), the two settle in a discomfort zone of drone snatches and folksy chant (both also vocalize). Critic Whitney Balliett famously called jazz "the sounds of surprise"; such adept, inveterate experimentalists as Frith and Portugal playfully tweak us with glittering galaxies and micro-sounds of surprise.

For more info visit intaktrec.ch. Frith is at The Stone at The New School Jun. 20 (with Simon Hanes) and The Perch (Philadelphia, PA) Jun. 24. See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.

**VOCAL RIVER
VIDEO LIBRARY**

**SPECIAL JUNE OFFER
24 NEW VIDEOS
+ (digital) VOCAL RIVER
book + exercise card set
+ FLIGHT**

Rhiannon
rhiannonmusic.com