

Immersive Listening

Perhaps acknowledging the *Art Of The Trio* series by Brad Mehldau, Ivo Perelman's six-part **The Art Of The Improv Trio (Leo Records 771-776)** aims for a similarly comprehensive listening immersion. This Brazilian New Yorker doesn't adhere to a single lineup, though. These sessions find the prolific tenor saxophonist partnered by various invitees, although drummer Gerald Cleaver is behind the kit for all but *Volume 2*, which features Whit Dickey. Also, Joe Morris appears on two volumes, though as electric guitarist and acoustic bassist on *Volume 5* and *Volume 6*, respectively. Five volumes were recorded in 2016, and one in 2015, so this is a flash of recently documented history.

The presence of Karl Berger (piano) on **Volume 1 (58:05 ★★★)** imparts a generally introspective nature, his thoughtful and sometimes tentative explorations calming Perelman and Cleaver into a placid, spacious frame. Perelman utters feathered phrases, with a tender vibrato, aiming for a soft and low resonance. Cleaver uses all parts of his kit with equal subtlety, skins, cymbals and hi-hat interlinked as one intricate timepiece. Berger wanders through some occasionally repetitive patterns, percussive in his own gentle fashion. Perelman maintains a thorough, winding flow. A similar mood of tender, emotional detective work is maintained throughout this 58-minute improvisation, although its fifth section awakens in agitation, before the sixth finishes with a return to introversion.

Mat Maneri (viola) and Whit Dickey (drums) join Perelman on **Volume 2 (51:24 ★★★½)**, the session being divided up into 13 short sections. The rapport between Perelman and Maneri is the strongest in this entire series, their pointillist complexities working closely beside Dickey's fuller, more resonantly booming kit style. Cleaver tends to make constructions in a more detailed and contained fashion. The intuition shared between horn and strings finds Perelman and Maneri joining in slipping-and-sliding effects, closely resonating their sustained tones.

When compared to Berger, pianist Matthew Shipp favors a constantly coiled tension on **Volume 3 (49:17 ★★★)**. Perelman shoots so high that he's virtually playing the trumpet role, always mobile as he skates at an accelerated pace, issuing a ribboning cascade of bittersweet cries, or opting for a fulsome, low throatiness. He sings out with a vocal articulation, as if



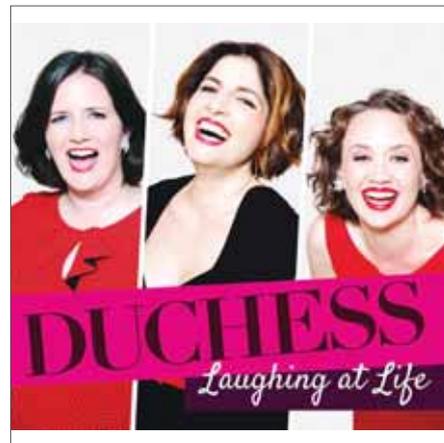
conducting a highly charged conversation with Shipp and Cleaver.

Perelman adopts a meatier tone for **Volume 4 (52:22 ★★★)**, joined by William Parker (bass) and Cleaver again. This is the most "jazzy" improvisation, following after Coltrane, but with a less assertive bent. Within the five minutes of the opening section, a contorted kind of conventional jazz emerges, heralding the 40-minute core, where Perelman runs through the course of what's essentially an unceasing solo.

As with Maneri, Joe Morris encourages Perelman to push into unclear zones, choosing electric guitar for **Volume 5 (52:00 ★★★½)**. The tenorman darts around the angular Morris shapes, constantly prowling. Perelman gives rapid chase along the geometric guitar-paths, while Cleaver works at the low end, building a dark terrain. Interactions work at a faster pace, making lightning connections. Sometimes Morris possesses a needling, percussive quality, at others he's broader and fuller, providing a simultaneous bass line. Perelman and Morris also work with sustained tones, spreading pure, flat coatings of sonic color.

Another odd-one-out is **Volume 6 (47:00 ★★★)**, recorded live at The Manhattan Inn in New York. It's the best of the bunch, with Morris on upright bass, captured in a fully rumbling state. There's a potent urgency present, through having an audience lapping up the trio's energies in real time. Perelman growling roughly, but with finesse, matching gruffness with agility. Morris is brutally booming, Cleaver clipping and cutting with ferocious precision, while Perelman takes his marathon soloing to the furthest boundaries. Close to the end, a honking maelstrom develops, but the trio actually finishes with an outbreak of swinging coolness. **DB**

Ordering info: leorecords.com



Duchess *Laughing At Life*

ANZIC RECORDS 0056

★★★★

For a good time, call Duchess. On its 2014 self-titled first album, this trio of lovely New York vocalists—Amy Cervini, Hilary Gardner and Melissa Stylianou—proved it could swing “close harmony,” revive wonderful vintage tunes and crack wise without missing a beat. On this, the group's second collection, the smooth vocal blend, good humor and general joie de vivre continue as these gifted vocalists continue to mine the American Songbook.

They are greatly aided by a crack band, arranged by producer Oded Lev-Ari, and special guests Anat Cohen on clarinet and Wycliffe Gordon on trombone. “Swing, Brother, Swing,” a Clarence Williams classic, is a perfect opener. The song also features an explosive tenor solo by Jeff Lederer, as the ladies exhort in three-part harmony, “Swing it, Jeffrey. ... Come on, Jeffrey!” The nostalgia quotient is high on songs like the romantic “Stars Fell On Alabama” and the World War II ballad “We'll Meet Again.”

Duchess has cited as its main inspiration the Boswell Sisters, the 1930s-era jazz-singing sisters whose uncanny blend and daring arrangements are still unsurpassed. A remake of a Boswell hit, “Everybody Loves My Baby,” one of the all-time classics of vocal jazz, is a high point here. In the song's breakneck “B” section, rather than try to copy the sisters' uniquely indecipherable version of pig Latin, the trio recites its own lyrics, sung impressively fast. I did, however, make out the words “tip our hat to the Bozzies.” —Allen Morrison

Laughing At Life: Swing Brother Swing; On The Sunny Side Of The Street; Laughing At Life; Everybody Loves My Baby; Stars Fell On Alabama; Give Him The Oo La La; Where Would You Be Without Me?; Creole Love Call; Hallelujah, I Love Her (Him) So; Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye; Strip Polka; Here's To The Losers; We'll Meet Again; CD bonus track: Dawn. (55:17) (vinyl-only track: Goin' Home)

Personnel: Amy Cervini, Hilary Gardner, Melissa Stylianou, vocals; Michael Cabe, piano; Matt Aronoff, bass; Jared Schonig, drums; Jesse Lewis, guitar; Jeff Lederer, tenor saxophone; Anat Cohen, clarinet; Wycliffe Gordon, trombone, vocal.

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