

SHARP - GIBBS - NIGGLI

CROSSING THE WATERS

Elliott Sharp: Guitar
Melvin Gibbs: Bass
Lucas Niggli: Drums

Music by Elliott Sharp, Melvin Gibbs, Lucas Niggli.
Recorded March 2012 at Trout Recording Studio, Brooklyn, NY. Engineer: Bryce Goggin. Mixed and mastered by Elliott Sharp at Studio zOaR, NYC.
Cover art: Roman Signer.
Graphic design: Jonas Schoder.
Liner notes: Christian Rentsch.

Intakt CD 215 / 2013

During the two-weeks festival by Intakt Records at John Zorn's club The Stone in New York's East Village, Sharp-Gibbs-Niggli performed for the first time. Three musicians with diverse backgrounds and biographies, but a very clear common goal: instant composing with hypertension, where Elliott Sharp's blues, Melvin Gibbs' funk and Lucas Niggli's drive found perfectly together to celebrate a unique music with no borders, lots of colours and massive energy. On the very day after the three musicians went for to a Brooklyn-studio and recorded the CD "Crossing the Waters". Excursions in the adventurous tonal landscapes based on blues, rock and free music.

Liner notes by Christian Rentsch

Elliott Sharp - Melvin Gibbs - Lucas Niggli. Crossing the Waters

In March 2012 Intakt Records curated a two-week festival at the New York jazz club The Stone on the invitation of John Zorn. Thirteen Swiss musicians from the Intakt label appeared, either with their bands, or with American colleagues they had already performed in Europe with, or had recorded with. Not Lucas Niggli. To him it was clear that if he was to have an adventure in the most important musical melting pot in the world, an adventure involving three concerts with completely different musicians within a few days, then it should be a real adventure. Certainly nothing routine, and nothing prepared or rehearsed either: a reckless tightrope walk without safety nets. He told the festival's curator Patrik Landolt that didn't want to appear at The Stone with any of his groups but with musicians he had never played with before: first encounters.

It was soon clear that one of them would have to be the guitarist Elliott Sharp. This was no surprise. Sharp, one of the most daring musicians on the New York experimental scene for over thirty-five years, is a genre-buster like Niggli, playing free jazz, independent rock and noise, writing for classical ensembles, string quartets and orchestras, fiddling around with electronic sounds, but also engaging with blues, a lateral thinker and player, equally at ease operating in the free improvisation scene and as a composer of highly complex instrumental conceptions based on mathematical formulas. Elliott Sharp studied physics and, importantly, remains an intellectual, political thinker; he is an undogmatic, surprising musician who rarely does what you expect of him, never chasing trends and fashions but always following his own maverick instinct. "I first heard Sharp in the mid eighties somewhere near Zürich as a sixteen-year-old, along with the turntablist Christian Marclay," Niggli says. "It was a revelation: here were individuals playing a kind of music unlike anything I had previously heard, which fascinated me and inspired me tremendously."

That Niggli would want to ask the electric-bass player Melvin Gibbs was also clear. "I first saw him live in the early nineties in Willisau with the trio Power Tools, alongside the drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson and the guitarist Bill Frisell. He too encapsulated something I had never heard done with such power before, an infectious yet calm energy, an intense mixture of blues and rock, a raw, post-Hendrix groove."

“Along with John Zorn, Tim Berne or Fred Frith, for me Sharp and Gibbs embody this New York Downtown scene, which influenced me in the nineties in particular, this curiosity, this uninhibited pleasure in experimentation which has no truck with labels or stylistic pigeon holes or pre-formed opinions and unquestioned values, but simply tries things out, mixing disparate elements to see what happens.”

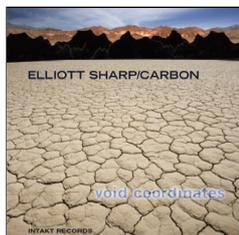
The concert on 2 March in the tiny club on Houston Street, filled to bursting, did not go entirely according to plan: sparks flew, literally. After just a short time Gibbs' bass amp died and it was twenty long minutes before the three musicians could begin again. Despite the risks incurred by such first encounters Intakt Records had already booked Trout Recording Studio in Brooklyn for the next day, a small studio with a particular charm, used by many musicians from the experimental rock scene, with carefully chosen vintage equipment, rather than state of the art technology, and a fine instrument selection, valve amplifiers and an arsenal of drums which Lucas Niggli was able to use.

After three and a half hours it was all over, with over two hours' music recorded, around half of which can be heard on this CD. And yet this condensed package of music sounds very different from most ad hoc productions like it. The muse doesn't kiss to order; you have to offer her something. It could be that the stimulating atmosphere of the festival, the ill-fated run-up to these recordings and the practiced, quick-fire manner of the technicians and musicians, which forced a kind of 'efficient creativity', all contributed from the start to this 'play flow', this buoyant state, in which, as Niggli says, "at no moment do you have to think what to do, because everything seems to happen as if by itself." More decisive however was that three musicians met in Trout Recording Studio, three maverick individuals, who, despite the classical line-up of a rock guitar trio, eschewed every kind of received categories and allowed each other to define their instruments and their role themselves at all times. A level playing field. There are musicians who inscribe this motto in big letters on the wall. This good intention can rarely be heard put into practice as strictly as by Elliott Sharp, Melvin Gibbs and Lucas Niggli on this CD.

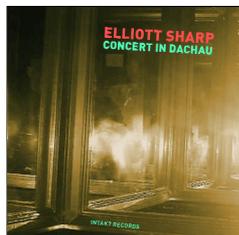
Christian Rentsch

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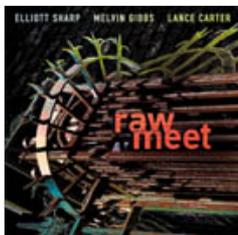
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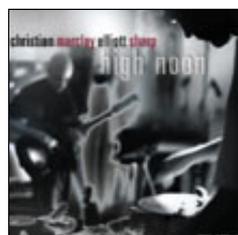
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VOID COORDINATES
Elliott Sharp, Zeena Parkins
Marc Sloan, Joseph Trump
David Weinstein
Intakt CD 163



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CONCERT IN DACHAU
Elliott Sharp: Guitar, Laptop
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ELLIOTT SHARP
MELVIN GIBBS-LANCE CARTER
RAW MEET
Elliott Sharp: Guitars, Melvin Gibbs: Bass
Lance Carter: Drums
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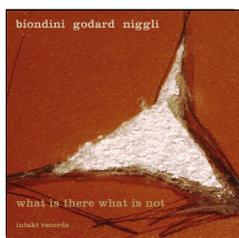


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Celebrate Diversity
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