

RiffTides

Doug Ramsey on Jazz and other matters...

Recent Listening: Partyka-Philipp, Blackwell-Smith, Hackett-Haggart

Flip Philipp & Ed Partyka Dectet, *Hair Of The Dog* (ATS). In their third album as co-leaders, Philipp and Partyka make a substantial addition to the recorded history of medium-sized jazz groups. From bands led by Fletcher Henderson through Red



Norvo, Duke Ellington, Woody Herman, Miles Davis, Gerry Mulligan, James Moody, Shorty Rogers, Dave Brubeck, Teddy Charles, Rod Levitt, Bill Kirchner and Charles Mingus—among many others—arrangers for six to eleven pieces have achieved flexibility that the mass of a sixteen-piece band inhibits. Philipp is an Austrian vibraharpist active in jazz who for twenty years has been principal percussionist of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. Partyka is an American trombonist who heads the jazz department at the

University of Music and Dramatic Arts in Graz, Austria. They are gifted composers and arrangers who relish referring to styles that preceded them, but are distinctively modern in harmony and voicing. In "Woman Trouble," Partyka uses sinuous wa-wa effects right out of Ellington and Philipp gives his Milt Jackson tribute "Groove Bag" a boogaloo sensibility, but they are not in the retro business.

The music has freshness, vigor, precision, daring and, often, a kind of wacky amiability. Philipp's "Minors" opens with a series of downward glissandos across the band, abruptly morphs into what could be car-chase music or something adapted from [Raymond Scott](#), then settles into lightning solos by Philipp and pianist Oliver Kent, interspersed with tightly written ensemble punctuations. Partyka's voicings in "Hair of the Dog" give the band expansiveness that belies its medium size. They provide Jure Pukl a cushy platform for his tenor saxophone in one of several impressive solos by the young Slovenian. All of the musicians except drummer Christian Salfellner get solo time. Salfellner contributes swing and sensitivity, commodities more rare and valuable than drum solos. "Kotzen Beim Steuerberater" has an exhilarating improvised duet between Robert Bachner on euphonium and the audacious bass clarinetist Wolfgang Schiffner. Fabian Rucker's heartfelt baritone saxophone takes center stage in Partyka's richly orchestrated "Let it Go, Ro." The title, an anagram, refers to the piece's original setting as Verdi's "La donna è mobile." Kent, Philipp, and Rucker on bass clarinet, float through Philipp's "Time," arranged to languid effect by Partyka. The solos are consistent reminders of the abundant pool of jazz talent in Central Europe, but it is Partyka's and Philipp's writing that gives this album its lasting value.

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