

NEW ISSUES

brim bram, squeaks, whistles, glockenspiel, perc. etc. Nov 20-21, 2008, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

5) GRAHAM CLARK & STEPHEN GREW IMPROVISATIONS SERIES ONE

GCIMPROV 1

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Clark, vln; Grew, p. Apr 1, 2008,
Manchester, UK.



Brad Williams by Jimmie Jones

and I suspect this group sounds even better live.

(4) German flutist Mark Alban Lotz has released a number of recordings but this is the first I've heard. His band, Lotz Of Music (cue collective groan), has a fluctuating personnel. For *Bite!*, the group is a quartet with Dutch-based players Albert Van Veenendaal on keyboards, cellist Lysander Le Coultre, and percussionist Alan "Gunga" Purves. Purves is featured here playing the brim bram, a wooden box wrapped with rubber bands, and which can be either struck or plucked. Lots describes *Bite!* as "19 tracks of underwater music ... a Dutch view on fish featuring the electrifying sounds of the brim bram!" Needless to say, this is not your average disc.

Surprisingly, for all of the oddness contained in the instrumentation, this doesn't sound all that strange. The music is tonal for the most part and the pieces tend to be fairly short (the longest clocks in at just over six minutes, most are in the two to three minute range). As a matter of fact, the pieces that work best are the longer ones. "Waiting For Prey" chugs along on a metronomic beat set by Purves that gradually accrues strength through its length by building up instrumentation (starting with the brim bram) to a sequence of chords played by Van Veenendaal. The textures with prepared flute and piano and a number of small odd percussion instruments are, needless to say, unusual and what make this disc so interesting and listenable. Sometimes recalling Harry Partch, at others Erik Satie, this is mostly a unique blend.

(5) As the title states, violinist Graham Clark and pianist Stephen Grew engage in a series of fourteen improvised duets. I was unfamiliar with either player but Googling Clark brings up a lot of associations with British players such as Keith Tippett, Howard Riley, Paul Hession, and a '90s version of Gong(!). Grew brings up a similar list (Hession, Pat Thomas, Mick Beck). What is clear is both are very accomplished musicians on their instruments and they are two players of a mind. Clark's violin is an expressive, versatile instrument that can sing and howl. Grew is a nimble player with lines constantly darting here and there, building up to Cecil Taylor-like barrages. He occasionally prepares the piano. The overwhelming tenor of this date is 20th century European Classical. Clark's violin is strong and directed. Grew's piano is dense and angular. The two seem to be able to continually spin lines around each. At times they even seem to complete each other's phrases. The program is presented in the order in which it was performed and it plays as a suite. At times the music can seem a bit austere but it is never uninteresting.

Robert Iannapollo