

TRAUMTON Records

Grunewaldstr. 9 D-13597 Berlin Germany

030 331 93 50
info@traumton.de
www.traumton.de



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David Helbocks Random/Control Think of Two

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David Helbock:

piano, inside-piano, toy-piano, melodica, bassdrum, clave, percussion, toys, electronics

Johannes Bär:

trumpet, flugelhorn, piccolo-trumpet, bass-trumpet, baritonehorn, tuba, helicon, sousaphon, alphorn, didgeridoo, beatbox percussion, electronics

Andreas Broger:

tenor sax, soprano sax, clarinet, bassclarinet, flute, slide-trumpet, bassdrum, percussion, electronics

David Helbock's Random/Control, Think of Two

It's that simple: you take three musicians and three dozens of instruments, a few favorite songs, you go to the studio and just start playing. The array of the set up of the musical adventure park of Random/Control was probably the most complicated part of the two-day session in the Traumton-Studio in Berlin. During the "sporty instrument changeovers" several "accidents" happened, David Helbock reports. However, nothing can be heard of these on his new CD – quite the contrary! Think of Two appears in playful airiness, which easily sweeps across all cultures, distances and styles.

I throw the damn rear view mirror out of the damn window, because I don't want to know where I'm coming from, but where I'm going. (F.L. Wright)

Originally the new oeuvre was supposed to be named "Two Wise Men with a Long Beard". But Helbock's Mudjaheddin-beard is gone by now; originating from Vorarlberg, Austria, coming through Vienna, the 30-year-old pianist is now a Berliner, young, adorned with multiple prizes and successful enough to draw a first little résumé. And he has done that on the basis of two of his most important influences, Thelonious Monk and Hermeto Pascoal. With the latter, Helbock has been trying to get in touch with for quite some time now. After he finally met the Brazilian multi-instrumentalist at a concert in Vienna and gave him one of his CDs along with his Hermeto inspired "Personal Realbook" (2008 for a whole year he wrote a new piece every day), a message came from Brazil one day, that Pascoal wants to record a piece for

him – “just like that and for free”, as the astonished Helbock reports. “Palhinha do Hermeto e da Aline” is the ninth title on the album, with four flute tracks, two piano tracks and four vocal tracks. And the acoustic confusion magnificently fits into the overall concept. The eccentric Hermeto Pascoal himself, is a declared fan of the eccentric jazz pianist Thelonious Monk, and so three brothers in spirit now sit harmoniously together on the piano stool on Think of Two. The result is a great jamboree, dashing up and down through the entire range of possibilities, at which you can easily envision how the composers’ spirits and the musicians animated and amazed one another.

See it as a chance, to tell story a little bit differently (Fred Hersh)

Thereby the three have the courage to hurl themselves into cliché without landing in the fordable. Helbock would certainly not be Helbock if he didn’t crawl under the skin of his favorite songs, if he didn’t truly “interpret” them. Like that, Monk’s “Pannonica”, about the jazz-patron de Koenigswater, becomes as crazy as the jazz-baroness herself. For “Trinkle Tinkle”, named after a childrens game, Helbock uses a toy piano in the interest of consistency. The classic tune “Round Midnight” becomes a melancholic walk over the rainy Parisian cobbles. The trio from Vorarlberg approaches “Tupizando”, a Hermeto piece dedicated to the Brazilian Tupi-natives, with beer bottles, and lo and behold, the jungle comes to life with birds’ twittering and shrieking. That “Nas quebradas” was underlayed with an alpine horn solo, doesn’t strike you at all anymore, just as little as the fact, that the Brazil-piece exhibits a surprising relationship to Vorarlberg; more astonishing is how Bär and Broger manage to switch so abruptly from large to small mouthpieces and that Helbock is never off the mark considering the multitude of sounds and instruments he uses. Only the listener might be confused, with which instrument which musician suddenly and unexpectedly creates a new, surprising focus. Think of Two is great musicianship, but virtuosity does not fly on autopilot here. They don’t struggle for the organic, but it sounds out from inside.

I prepare myself for not being prepared (Lee Konitz)

Chance and control are two determinants, which are actually mutually exclusive. “The whole thing with Random/Control has become a little challenge – more and more instruments were added and keep being added”, Helbock says about the process of development. On “Voa, Ilza” oscillation sounds and heartbeats explosively open the lively dance. Everyone chucks in anything anywhere – and everything fits well! They would have had even more ideas (and probably also instruments), but unfortunately no more than 80 minutes fit on the CD. That these were filled to the brim in only two days, speaks for the blind mutual understanding of the trio – energized by the common origin (Vorarlberg), the shared schooldays (Helbock / Bär) and a long musical collaboration (Helbock/ Bär/ Boger).

“Helbock’s B&B” celebrates his meta-technical transculturation so casually, as if Vorarlberg has always housed world culture. It only needed somebody who guides it out from there. David Helbock, whose last name includes “Hel”, the ruler of the underworld in Nordic mythology, and “Bock” [German for “buck”], a traditional synonym for the devil and for virility, is indeed a seducer into the layers under his musical pieces, a buffer against stylistic one-dimensionality and thereby, whether living in Vienna or Berlin, definitely has arrived on the world stage.

Back-Katalog:
Random/Control (Traumton Records 2010)

Links:
David Helbock: <http://www.davidhelbock.com>