

EUROPEAN SCENE

By Peter Margasak

Jazz's roots in Europe are strong. This column looks at the musicians, labels, venues, institutions and events moving the scene forward "across the pond." For questions, comments and news about European jazz, e-mail europescene@downbeat.com.

Since the 1960s, when British musicians like Derek Bailey, Evan Parker and John Stevens forged a radical strain of non-idiomatic improvisation, abstract on-the-fly music making has gone through loads of permutations. But over the last decade or so, perhaps the biggest factor in the music's growth has been non-musical. The Internet has allowed an international community of musicians to flourish and interact, and now it's hardly surprising that strong players thrive in far-flung locales.

"It's played an essential role in what concerns the edification of an international community, and we're all part of it," Portuguese violinist Ernesto Rodrigues said. In Lisbon, a city whose best-known musical export remains the emotionally fraught fado, he's emerged as a distinctive voice of experimentation. Thanks to his Creative Sources label, the world is becoming an even smaller place.

Although Rodrigues grew up around the arts — his father was a playwright and his godfather was a classical musician — a childhood pal got him enrolled in a conservatory. While he studied the classics, he was pursuing a strong interest in experimental music and soon became influenced by the English school of free improvisation. "The relationship with my instrument is focused on textural elements," he said. "Electronic music was an early influence on my approach to violin playing, which challenges

traditional romantic concepts of the instrument through the use of preparations and micro-tuning."

Rodrigues launched the label in 2001, primarily to document his own work. He quickly managed to survey a broader range of activity in Lisbon with recordings that featured



Ernesto Rodrigues

ALFREDO COSTA MONTEIRO

guitarists Manuel Mota and José Oliveira, pianist Gabriel Paiuk, bassist Margarida Garcia and his son, cellist Guilherme Rodrigues, among others. Much of the work subscribes to a minimal, gestural style of free improvisation, although Rodrigues recognizes a distinctly Mediterranean quality, "that one doesn't find outside the country. There's generally some feeling of contemplation and lyricism," he said.

Before long the strength of the work began attracting others, and now, with a catalog that boasts more than 50 titles, Creative Sources not only represents the state of the art of improvisation in Europe — with work

from people like Axel Dörner (Germany), Stéphane Rives (France), Ingar Zach (Norway) and Alessandro Bosetti (Italy) — but in other locales as well, including the United States, Japan and Lebanon. Now Lisbon has become an important stop on any international itinerary, and early this year Rodrigues will be touring the United States with Mota. *Details:* creativesourcesrec.com

One of the strongest Scandinavian groups to emerge in the last few years is Atomic — comprised of Sweden's Magnus Broo (trumpet) and Fredrik Ljungkvist, and Norway's Havard Wiik (piano), Ingebrigt Haaker Flaten (bass) and Paal Nilssen-Love (drums). The quintet has recently released *Nuclear Assembly Hall* (Okka Disk), a superb two-CD collaboration with the American-Norwegian quartet School Days. A three-CD box set of live recordings, *The Bikini Tapes* (Jazzland), makes a powerful case for the group's talent, where superb improvisations stretch highly distinctive writing.

Part of what makes the most interesting European jazz click is a deep knowledge of the music's full breadth, but an esthetic that refuses to be cowed by that history. There's no conflict when Ljungkvist's heavily composed "Toner Fran Forr" makes space for both New Orleans-style polyphony and extended technique. **DB**

Details: jazzlandrec.com

The ARCHIVES

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'95% of Music In Chicago Is Canned!' No more records will be made in Chicago after February 1st!!! So ruled Chicago Federation of Musicians President James Petrillo and his board of directors, as they boldly moved to forfeit whatever employment recording activities gave musicians in the Chicago jurisdiction, in an effort to take a troublesome situation into their own hands.

Citing other crafts and professions that have seen its employment destroyed by labor-saving devices, and hav-



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ing seen the musicians' work dwindle year by year, with no relief in sight from the rising tide of "canned music," Petrillo believes

there is no other solution than to get control of the source of music making.

Hampton Most Exciting Artist of '36

By George Frazier

If 1936 produced an outstanding new personality in hot jazz, Lionel Hampton is probably the man. Here again, a phonograph record — the Goodman Quartet's Victor of "Dinah" and

"Moonglow" — served to introduce a superb musician, and almost overnight, to spread his name from coast to coast. Hampton is unquestionably the most exciting vibe artist yet to come our way.

The Duke Plays The Cotton Club Duke Ellington began a brief reign at the Cotton Club amid pre-holiday confusion, but had no trouble in impressing everyone with the fact that his is still the most distinctive style in America, his band one of the best. His intriguing harmonies, unusual almost to the point of being weird, seem plausible when backed by the excellent playing of some of the best soloists in the business. **DB**