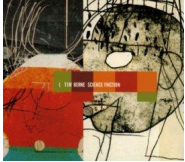


Tim Berne - Science Friction (2002)

Written by bluesever
Sunday, 28 April 2013 16:09 -

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1. *Huevos*; 2. *iHornet*; 3. *Sigh Fry*; 4. *Manatee Woman*; 5. *Mikromaus*; 6. *Jalapeno Diplomacy*; 7. *The Mallomar Maneuvre*; 8. *Clown Finger*. Personnel: Craig Taborn: electric keyboards; Ton Rainey: drums; Marc Ducret: electric and acoustic guitars; Tim Berne: alto saxophone.

In 1996, after years of working under the auspices of indie labels like JMT and Soul Note, alto saxophonist Tim Berne took total artistic control over his work. The first release on his new Screwgun label was *Unwound*, a sprawling three disc live set documenting his working quartet, Bloodcount.

The freedom Berne earned with this career move made possible a kind of crystalline clarity: the records that followed display his vision in an uncompromising and revealing way. *Science Friction* is just such a document. It opens with a slippery funk salvo that rides off the beat and refuses to be pinned down. The angular rhythms and percolating energy of "Huevos" persist throughout the record, though the group channels them through various moods and colors. Drummer Tom Rainey, a long-time collaborator, is absolutely key to giving the pulse life—when the music heats up, he works the kit in surprising and unpredictable ways. And during softer moments (as on "Sigh Fry") he seems just as comfortable with quiet, rustling snare work and the occasional shimmer of accent on the cymbals.

But in the end, *Science Friction* is unequivocally a group effort which relies on each player's strengths. Berne penned five of these tunes; his compositional style relies on a quirky rhythms and open-ended themes that collapse or expand to fit the situation. They require a particular kind of cohesion, where musicians must ride together during organized parts and then blast through boundaries during periods of freer improvisation—without sounding disjointed or (horror of horrors!) predictable at any time. Above and beyond the quartet proper, David Torn receives

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credits for sound massage, but his role remains enigmatic. Perhaps the idea of being "manipulated, processed, and complimented" renders an invisible logic to the disc. Hard to tell. Maybe that's the point. (You can definitely tell someone massaged "The Mallomar Manoeuvre," a one-minute collage piece riddled with glitch and texture.)

Compared to Berne's earlier efforts, Science Friction represents a high-water mark. Berne remains one of the most distinctive voices in modern jazz, who—best of all—seems to have an uncanny ability to assemble sympathetic musical collaborators who share his vision. ---Nils Jacobson, allaboutjazz.com

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