



Double Windsor
Sylvie Courvoisier Trio (Tzadik)
Birdies for Lulu
Sylvie Courvoisier/Mark Feldman Quartet (Intakt)
by John Sharpe

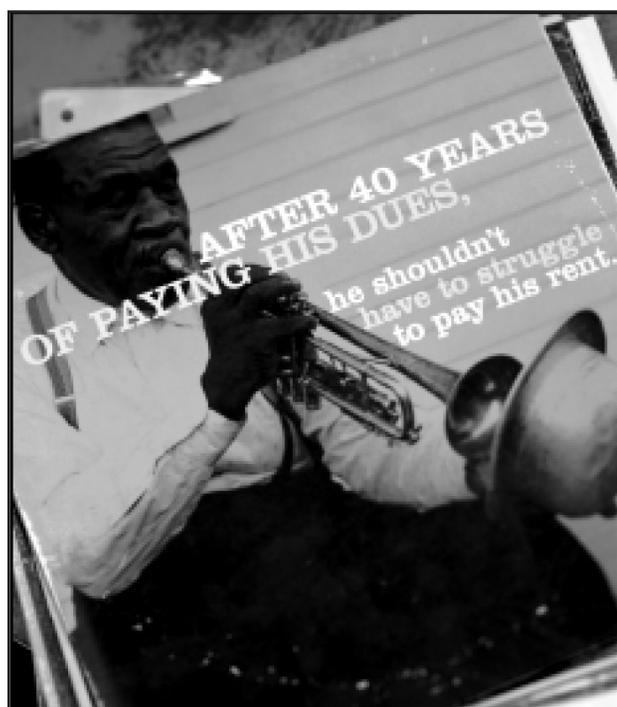
Swiss-born, New York-based pianist Sylvie Courvoisier can be hard to pin down. She covers a wide gamut with equal conviction, from jazz-inflected riffs to airy romanticism, via arrhythmic improv and chamber abstraction, enacted both at the keyboard and within the guts of the piano. With so much terrain at her disposal, it's no wonder that she boasts such a breadth of collaborators, stretching from Lotte Anker to John Zorn, with over 30 leadership dates in her discography.

However, surprisingly, she hadn't tackled the piano trio until, at Zorn's behest, she put together the group on *Double Windsor* of bassist Drew Gress and drummer Kenny Wollesen. Juxtapositions of contrasting elements form an important strand in Courvoisier's work, whether they be of mood, meter or texture. It's clear she has chosen her partners well as they make the continual switchbacks appear natural and unforced. With his rich sound and strong melodic sense allied to rhythmic nous, Gress helps ensure that Courvoisier's mysterious charts, full of unexpected twists and turns, remain anchored in the jazz tradition. In that he's aided by Wollesen's mastery of timbre and broken grooves, which lengthen and play with time, bending it to the

group will. They get things off to a fine start on the title number as a darkly rolling ostinato, which achieves thrilling immediacy when doubled by bass and piano, alternating with pensive ruminations. It cuts to a melancholy bowed bass melody that seems to be from a different piece entirely, prior to a return of the opening gambit to finish what must be one of the piano trio tracks of the year. There's little sign of a dip thereafter either, as solos and improvisation are so well incorporated into the ingenious writing that they can escape notice, so integral are they to the magnificence of the overall flow.

That same love of juxtaposition becomes a credo, seemingly shared by the whole outfit, in Courvoisier's quartet with husband/violinist Mark Feldman on *Birdies for Lulu*. Only here the range of interjections is wider still with more of an even split between jazz, contemporary classical and improv tropes. It's most obvious on the four parts of Feldman's "Cards For Capitaine", created by giving instructions/notation on a series of cards, randomly reordered prior to performance. The first part features a "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy"-type shuffle while subsequent installments offset open interaction with fast scuttling rhythms and delicately strummed piano strings and plaintive violin. Drummer Billy Mintz' "Schmear" continues the thesis as a folksy dash abruptly switches first to churchy piano chords then to later sections showcasing Feldman's husky violin and Courvoisier's rollercoaster piano. After a captivating intro in which Courvoisier counterbalances prepared and unprepared segments of the keyboard, Feldman's lovely "Natarajasana" evokes Arvo Pärt's "Fratres" in its combination of mournful violin and somber hymnal, briefly illuminated by bassist Scott Colley's tuneful pizzicato. In fact, every composition is both complex and multi-faceted, exquisitely executed with sly humor amid the pathos and charm.

For more information, visit tzadik.com and intaktrec.ch. Courvoisier is at *The Stone* Nov. 2nd and 14th and *Roulette* Nov. 29th with John Zorn. See Calendar.



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Eponymous
Boom Crane (Fresh Sound-New Talent)
Dragon Father
Jeff Davis (Fresh Sound-New Talent)
by Ken Micallef

Greeley, Colorado native Jeff Davis is a mainstay on New York City's creative music scene, his textural, highly illustrative drumming elevating releases by Robin Verheyen, Jesse Stacken, Kirk Knuffke and others. Davis' prior releases, *Leaf House* and *We Sleep Outside*, tended towards the free and abstract, his drumming explosions and experiments like kindling aiding a rhythmic fire of punctuations, pops and sizzles.

On *Boom Crane*, the trio of the same name Davis jointly leads with alto saxophonist/clarinetist Peter Van Huffel and bassist Michael Bates, the drummer joins in explorations of gutbucket swing and abstract excursions.

Extremely like-minded, the trio begins with "More Room", which seems to start in the middle of the tune. Davis plays a brief introduction, quickly leading to a winding bass solo. It's an odd intro to any album, cracking the door open just wide enough to let you see where the trio is heading. After the bass solo, alto joins in and the trio begins a series of escalations, de-escalations and off-kilter swing pulses. The rest of *Boom Crane* follows this freeish-intro-meets-walking

trajectory, from the scattered rhythms of "Jest" and the Latin "Automatic Vaudeville" to "Slipper Hero", which swings jaggedly. *Boom Crane* ties it all together via the trio's excellent conversational skills and adroit pacing.

Davis' *Dragon Father*, is similar in spirit but expanded to a quintet with Kirk Knuffke (cornet), Oscar Noriega (alto sax/clarinet), Russ Lossing (piano) and Eivind Opsvik (bass). The music again teeters between abstract journeys and in-the-pocket pulses. No matter how far out this quintet explores, swing is their common currency, whether it's nearly trad or as out as Albert Ayler. Recorded at Cornelia Street Café in New York City in March 2013, the music is beautifully rendered.

After much jockeying and soloing the quintet arrives at a swing pulse punctuated by unusual accents in opener "Dirt Farmer". "Spicy Water" recalls water dripping from a faucet, shimmers of subtle group melody played in unison with brushed drums. The quintet slowly shakes up the song's through-composed melody, a rubato breakdown of growling cornet and stuttering alto leading to a delicate piano solo. At one point in the tune, Davis and Opsvik play an amazing rhythm that sounds like two small animals wrestling for dominance. *Dragon Father* continues with the zigzagging eighth-note pulse of "May 16th", horror soundtrack experimentation leading to a kind of Latin overdrive in "Pavilion of Temporary Happiness" and closes with the lovely title ballad, which wouldn't be out of place on a Paul Motian album, played straight and open, allowing the simple melody to shine and flourish. This closes a heaving, to-and-fro album on a grand note, the calm after the storm.

For more information, visit freshsoundrecords.com. Davis is at *Cornelia Street Café Nov. 2nd* with *Boom Crane*, *Ibeam Brooklyn Nov. 12th* and *SEEDS Nov. 19th*. See Calendar.

RECOMMENDED

- Kenny Barron/Dave Holland – *The Art of Conversation* (Impulse!)
- Abelardo Barroso and Orquesta Sensacion – *Cha Cha Cha* (Puchito-World Circuit)
- Lenny Breau – *LA Bootleg 1984* (Guitarchives)
- Brian Charette – *Good Tipper* (Posi-Tone)
- Michel Doneda – *Everybody Digs Michel Doneda* (Relative Pitch)
- Charlie Haden/Jim Hall – *Eponymous* (Impulse!)
- Wayne Horvitz – *The Royal Room Collective Music Ensemble* (Songlines)
- Wadada Leo Smith/Bill Laswell – *The Stone* (M.O.D. Technologies/Incunabula)
- Ståhls Trio – *Jag Skulle Bara Gå Ut* (Moserobie)
- Trio 3 + Vijay Iyer – *Wiring* (Intakt)

Laurence Donohue-Greene, Managing Editor

NEW RELEASES

- Omer Avital – *New Song* (Motéma Music)
- Daniel Blackberg Trio – *Perilous Architecture* (NoBusiness)
- Michael Blake – *Tiddy Boom* (Sunnyside)
- Tomas Fujiwara Trio – *Variable Bets* (Relative Pitch)
- Russ Johnson – *Still Out To Lunch!* (Enja/Yellowbird)
- Branford Marsalis – *In My Solitude* (*Live at Grace Cathedral*) (OKeh)
- Arun Ramamurthy Trio – *Jazz Carnatica* (s/r)
- Akira Sakata/Fred Lonberg-Holm/Ketil Gutvik/Paal Nilssen-Love – *The Cliff of Time* (PNL)
- Alex Skolnick's Planetary Coalition – *Eponymous* (ArtistShare)
- Aki Takase/Alexander Von Schlippenbach – *So Long, Eric!* (*Homage to Eric Dolphy*) (Intakt)

Andrey Henkin, Editorial Director