

ABOUT THIS ALBUM Nils Wogram, the bouncing boy from Braunschweig with the seemingly unmeltable trombone no matter how hot the lines, bounces back with more of his happy music for people who love good ol' clean and discreet bop. This time he has a few surprises in his gig bag, with a whole array of microtonal compositions that not only split the tones down the middle, but pack a groovy punch to boot, guaranteed to help ward off any blues.

When it came to choosing a team of sound and groove merchants, Wogram had to look no further than his very own *Root 70*. Already well greased and oiled with years of club touring behind them and having cut eight sides of deep swing with Wogram at the helm, his number one working band was called up for this, his latest of his wild Jazz expeditions.

The quartet of *Root 70* have made a name as a band that isn't afraid to push the boundaries of Jazz, and during their exhaustive world tours have had the time to experiment with all manner of groove massaging and melodic invention. Together with alto wizard Hayden Chisholm, Nils Wogram has this time dived into a world of lush microtones, dividing up the once sacred octave into 24 parts, and serving us melodies that are nothing like anything we have heard before in Jazz.

The side kicks off with Chisholm's *Immaculate Conception* and the conception is just as the title says with the trombone and alto subtly gliding up a quarter tone in the second bar over some sweet brushwork by Rueckert. The message is clear – *Root 70* isn't here just to play around with new tricks, but this is all about groove and the deepest of swings, all the more penetrating with the perky melodic twists dancing above a profoundly "rooted" rhythm section.

The solos of Wogram and Chisholm build subtle extensions to the heads. The duo sprinkle their improvisations with the same kind of melodic playfulness evident in the impish melodies that flow from Wogram's Jazz pen. They quote each other, shift phrases up and down microtonally, build slowly and gracefully around the melodic foam that froths over regularly from their horns' rims. The depth of tonal intermingling is stunning and one can sense that

these young jazz warriors have worked hard to refine their sounds in countless smoky clubs until the blend was finally achieved, a kind of extended jazz alchemy that is now paying off massive dividends in the studio.

In Wogram's *Wrong Lips* the trombone kicks off in unison with Penman's rich bass to set up a glorious groove again powered by the sheer effortlessness in their touch- the bass and the trombone become one alongside the easy swing of Rueckert who in my opinion has never sounded so relaxed yet serenely potent. Like all the other tracks on the record, the chords are borrowed from an old standard, this time *It's alright with me*, and the melody and solos are built anew. Penman once mentioned to me in an uptown club that this was one of his favorite tunes and you can hear it- his bass weaves melodies in this track that few horn players could dream of.

Back to Rueckert now, the once dubbed "Billy the Kid" of the New York scene with his ambidextrous rhythmic wonders. He may have mellowed out over the years (after all, what more does the man have to prove!) , but on the next track *Hyper You* we get to hear just how loud this young lion can roar under a wickedly fast and tricky form. The chart may have an innocent little 4/4 up in the top left corner, but that is nothing more than a red rag to a jazz bull for the likes of Ruckert, who peppers this Wogram tune with faustian cross rhythms within his eternally robust and full-bodied groove. He really seems to flourish here, weaving around the repeating melody of the horns, landing at the end of each form perfectly on the one having taken his rhythmic super-impositions to places few Punjab tabla masters would otherwise dare to venture.

Chisholm's alto is as ever soft and and mysterious on the outside, tough and burly within. It is a tone that denies comparison, loaded with the rich history of Jazz and yet injected with a hint of the bittersweet irony of our time. For his short and beautiful intro to *Tight, Out of Sight* he glides effortlessly around the horn, the sound sometimes fading effortlessly into pure breath. We feel we can hear the very copper of his horn sing out, the wet reed vibrate close to our ears, and the tone has an immediacy that is almost chilling. Although the Alto and

the Trombone have little in common on the outside, Wogram and Chisholm have developed timbres that mirror and compliment each other perfectly, and in the mid range there are pitches where it is hard to say which instrument is which.

After Chisholm's intro, the band moves together into a field of complex microtonality. The chords themselves shift up and down in quarter-tone steps and yet incredibly, Wogram's pen guides us in such a way that we feel in familiar territory. Because the eight ears of the band are so in sync, and the intonation so stringent, we never feel too far away from our chromatic home shores. Sometimes a blue note reminds us of where we came from, other times a soft microtone leads us to a new and alluring jazz isle. With Wogram at the helm, Chisholm behind the bar, and Rueckert and Penman sweating together in the engine room, we are truly in safe hands.

Searching for a single word to encapsulate this band and this outing I settled on "tight". The sound, the groove, the solos, the band sound, everything these young men deliver is compact and tight. Their second album was called *Getting Rooted*, having done that with style it was all about "The Pleasure of Driving" (*Fahrvergnuegen*). Now we can sit back and take in the deceiving simplicity of these swing tunes through the rigorous lens of a band that is charged with understatement and subtlety.

Root 70 on 52nd^{1/4} street ends with the New-Orleans style groove of *Bend your Branch*. Penman and Rueckert thrive in this groove and this is the sort of tune you might find yourself whistling to, microtones and all. A perfect end to a stunningly original discreet bop cruise.

Ahmet Shabo, NYC Feb 2008

ADDITIONAL RECORDING INFORMATION Almost every musician and sound engineer I have talked to praises the warm sound of «the old jazz recordings». Because I am particularly a fan of the Columbia recordings from the late 1950s I wanted to imitate a studio set-up from that time coming as close as possible to the original equipment and room sound. By checking out various mosaic records record boxes with session photos from that time I got an impression of the whole thing. On the search for a similar sounding room I came across the old GDR Radio Studio in Berlin hosting warm sounding wooden rooms with high ceilings.

The album was recorded live to two track analog tape on a Telfunken (M15) 1/2 inch machine. The band was recorded with 5 Neumann tube microphones: U47 for the Drums, U67 for the Bass and an M49 for Sax and Trombone. Preamps: Telfunken VK76 and Studer with no digital effects. To the original room sound a little reverb was added by playing the signal to the studio's reverb room and an EMT 140 Plate (with tube ampifier)

The goal was to record original contemporary jazz music with a vintage recording approach. All the tunes are based on the chord progressions of Broadway pieces and use 24 quartertones per octave. More conceptional albums by Root 70 like this will be released in the future. Have fun! *Nils Wogram, 2008*

ALL COMPOSITIONS by Nils Wogram except *Immaculate Conception* by Hayden Chisholm
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