

Norbert Stein/Pata Messengers

We Are

PataMusic Pata 24

Ivo Perelman/Matthew Shipp/William Parker/Bobby Kapp

Heptagon

Leo Records LR 807

Putting individual stamp(s) on the classic tenor saxophone-and-rhythm-section formation are two veteran saxophonists, German Norbert Stein, whose musical associates are all Köln-based and Brazilian Ivo Perelman playing with a trio of New Yorkers. In spite of the almost identical CD length and instrumentation, the eclectic nature of improvised music allows for genuinely autonomous discs, which also expose oblique variants of each saxophonist's usual work. Stein, often helms meticulously arranged programs of his compositions for larger ensembles, and who has recently been flirting with interpretations of German poetry, lets himself go on *We Are*, with seven performances which speak to old-time jam sessions as well as Free Music sound exploration. Perelman during the past couple of decade has established himself as one of the bolsters of the uncompromising Free Jazz tradition. However there are points during Heptagon's six tracks where the melodious concept which is always subtly present in his improvising become more obvious.

Stein's *Pata Messengers* here consist of Austrian pianist Philip Zoubek, whose exploratory playing usually takes place alongside the likes of Carl Ludwig Hübsch; bassist Joscha Oetz, who plays with folks like Simon Nabatov; and percussionist Etienne Nillesen, who has also worked with Hübsch and Nabatov. Perelman's associates include pianist Matthew Shipp and bassist William Parker, some of the most recorded jazzers of our time, whose playing partners range from Evan Parker, Hamid Drake and outwards in every direction; plus drummer Bobby Kapp, a 1960s avant-gardist recently returned to the scene.

Pressurized, buoyant and with a hint of melody, Stein's unmatched horn explorations dig into the furthest regions of his horn with the same singleness of purpose he brings to orchestral exploration. Sticking to mostly the same tempo and with the same depth of feeling throughout, Zoubek's animated keyboard forays not only dig out drama on their own, but also add two-handed cohesion in tandem with the tenor saxophone work. Playing only prepared snare drum and cymbal, Nillesen bolsters the rhythm without bravado. Free form and grounded at the same time, many of the tracks follow different patterns. Stein's harsh blowing and snorting with a Hard Bop edge on "What We Are" for instance networks a swinging interface to include a walking bass line, measured clangs from the drummer and fleet comping from Zoubek. In contrast, "Diatonic Upanishad" is a staccato tenor saxophone showcase, but like a Western climber in the Himalayas, the achievement is made possible by Sherpa-like bolstering from parade-ground-like drumming and locked-in piano chords.

Most arresting are consecutive tracks, "Polarity", "Be yond!" and "Mellstones", which could comfortably be a triptych suite by themselves. On the first, the pianist's key clipping elaborates a near-balladic exposition which seesaws alongside moderato reed slurs. Picking up the tempo, the following tune is freer at first, prodded by popping drum beats, high-frequency piano glissandi and altissimo reed split tomes, only to slip unobtrusively into the more mellow "Mellstones". Featuring a strummed guitar-like bass solo and subtle harmonies from the pianist which cuddle alongside carefully organized tonal breaths from the saxophonist, the final theme adds up to the perfect suite ending and CD finale.

Expert in rugged syncopated rhythms and chiaroscuro multiphonics, the quartet on Heptagon never mutates sounds and narratives to the extent that a certain musical strategy isn't clear. One obvious contrast with *We Are* is the position of the double bass. Oetz's contributions may be muted by the other *Pata Messengers*' sounds. But Parker's upright pulse throbs throughout Heptagon, not quite upfront, but not 'way behind either.

| [A](#) | [B](#) | [C](#) | [D](#) | [E](#) | [F](#) | [G](#) | [H](#) | [I](#) | [J](#) |  
[K](#) | [L](#) | [M](#) | [N](#) | [O](#) | [P](#) | [Q](#) | [R](#) | [S](#) | [T](#) |  
| [U](#) | [V](#) | [W](#) | [X](#) | [Y](#) | [Z](#) |

A

[Dave Aaron \(3\)](#)  
[Anders Aarum \(1\)](#)  
[Ben Abarbanel-Wolff \(2\)](#)  
[Rez Abbasi \(3\)](#)  
[Paul Abbot \(2\)](#)  
[Tom Abbs \(12\)](#)  
[Christine Abdelnour \(14\)](#)  
[Sakina Abdou \(2\)](#)  
[Ahmed Abdullah \(5\)](#)  
[Chris Abelen \(2\)](#)  
[Rabih Abou-Khalil \(1\)](#)  
[Chris Abrahams \(20\)](#)  
[Muhai Richard Abrams \(10\)](#)  
[Joshua Abrams \(27\)](#)  
[Beñat Achiary \(1\)](#)  
[Idris Ackamoor \(1\)](#)  
[Bruce Ackley \(20\)](#)  
[Carlo Actis Dato \(19\)](#)  
[Serge Adam \(1\)](#)  
[Rino Adamo \(1\)](#)  
[Steve Adams \(22\)](#)  
[John Adams \(2\)](#)  
[Norman Adams \(1\)](#)  
[Jason Adasiewicz \(29\)](#)  
[Christopher Adler \(2\)](#)  
[Stan Adler \(1\)](#)  
[Irene Aebi \(5\)](#)  
[Sophie Agnel \(20\)](#)  
[Béla Ágoston \(2\)](#)  
[Gianfranco Agresti \(1\)](#)  
[Gustavo Aguilar \(1\)](#)  
[Ajaramu \(1\)](#)  
[Jason Ajemian \(8\)](#)  
[Yusuke Akai \(1\)](#)  
[Rashied Al Akbar \(1\)](#)  
[Noël Akchoté \(8\)](#)  
[Ulf Åkerhjelm \(1\)](#)  
[Ali N. Askin \(1\)](#)  
[Sevket Akinci \(2\)](#)  
[Ambrose Akinmusire \(1\)](#)  
[Tetuzi Akiyama \(5\)](#)  
[Pheeroan akLaff \(6\)](#)

At times as well, the simpatico Arco slides and elevated timbre expelling from Perelman throughout almost mirror one another. On the other hand, the friction generated by Kapp's drums is usually conveyed by unobtrusive brush work or uncomplicated tick-tock patterns. That means that a track like "Part 4" is compartmentalized with subtle swing as Shipp's high frequency patterning takes the form of decorative elaborations, while Perelman's theme examination is squeezed out with toothpaste tube-like consistency, with only the occasional whines and slurps relating to his usual vibrations. However the track that precedes it features unreconstructed Free Jazz swing with the reed line pin-width narrow and altissimo, prodded by slippery bass string sweeps.

The plateau reached by layering desiccated tones from Perelman on top of galloping kinetics from Shipp and chromatic pushes from the bassist and drummer on "Part 5", is scaled by a drum solo and leads to a sinewy stride showcase for Shipp on "Part 6". Instructively, before he starts deconstructing the theme via shrill pitches, backed by spiccato double slides and smacks plus a waft of scattered theme variations, Perelman has exposed a light Paul Desmond-like tone earlier on that track. From that point on, the climatic and final "Part 7" reprises many of the multi-sequenced motifs in miniature as it works up to a crescendo. Kapp click-clacks to hold the beat, Parker thumps out a further theme-shaping beat and Shipp comps rhythmically. All of this sets up some kinetic tongue and lip jujitsu from the saxophonist, which in a thickset of slippery, slurry, and soaring reed bites concludes the program, confirming both its neutral and irregularly configured parts.

Two tenor-saxophone-and-rhythm-section CDs prove with unique and satisfying sounds the reason why this formation has long been considered classic.

—Ken Waxman

Track Listing: We: 1. Perfume 2. Gondwana & Pangea 3. Diatonic Upanishad 4. El Fado 5. What We Are 6. Polarity 7. Beyond! 8. Mellstones 9. Friendship

Personnel: We: Norbert Stein (tenor saxophone); Philip Zoubek (piano); Joscha Oetz (bass) and Etienne Nillesen (prepared snare drum and cymbal)

Track Listing: Heptagon: 1. Part 1 2. Part 2 3. Part 3 4. Part 4 5. Part 5 Part 5 6. Part 6 7. Part 7

Personnel: Heptagon: Ivo Perelman (tenor saxophone); Matthew Shipp (piano); William Parker (bass) and Bobby Kapp (drums)

Guillaume Aknine (3)  
Branislav Aksin (7)  
Ahmad Al-Khatib (1)  
Yonatan Albalak (1)  
Liz Albee (1)  
Jeff Albert (5)  
Gianluca Alberti (1)  
Kristoffer Berre Alberts (3)  
Susan Alcorn (1)  
Ken Aldcroft (10)  
Alaeddin Aldernest (1)  
Mats Ålekliint (9)  
Milan Aleksić (2)  
Marijus Aleska (2)  
Ralph Alessi (21)  
Aaron Alexander (4)  
Alexander Alexandrov (1)  
Esteban Algora (3)  
Rashied Ali (8)  
Muhammad Ali (4)  
Luqman Ali (2)  
Sean Ali (7)  
Cristina Alioto (1)  
Michael Alizon (1)  
Liz Allbee (4)  
Lina Allemano (2)  
Marshall Allen (19)  
Geri Allen (2)  
Gordon Allen (8)  
Kris Allen (1)  
Ben Allison (5)  
James Allsopp (1)  
Goncalo Almeida (5)  
Chefa Alonso (4)  
Alessandro Altarocca (1)  
Maarten Altena (1)  
Martine Altenburger (3)  
Andy Altenfelder (3)  
Laura Altman (2)  
Barry Altschul (15)  
Lisa Alvarado (1)  
Remi Álvarez (3)  
Rodrigo Amado (14)  
Elio Amato (1)  
Oren Ambarchi (6)  
Joachim Ambros (1)  
David Ambrosio (2)  
Scott Amendola (9)  
Gene Ammons (1)  
Ganesh Anandan (4)  
Laura Andel (3)  
Trevor Anderies (1)  
Martin Andersen (1)  
Arild Andersen (2)