

Keresman on Disc

New York Art Quartet ★★★
Old Stuff
 Cuneiform

Burton Greene ★★★
Live at the Woodstock Playhouse 1965
 Porter

Who remembers 1965? If you don't: The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Byrds, Beach Boys, and Motown held sway on the pop charts, John Coltrane shook up the jazz world, Sinatra was still Chairman, Dino (Martin) was cool, and—as usual—some note-

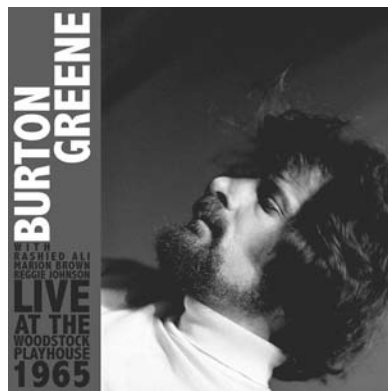


New York Art Quartet.

worthy stuff went on under the cultural radar. The term “supergroup” hadn't yet been coined, but New York Art Quartet was one such outfit of jazz's underground: trombonist Roswell Rudd, alto saxophonist John Tchicai (How many musicians can say they played with two of musicdom's greatest Johns, Coltrane and Lennon? He can.), bassists (alternately) Lewis Worrell, Reggie Workman, and Richard Davis, and drummers (alternately) Milford Graves and Louis Moholo. The NYAQ only issued two studio albums in their short existence, so this makes *Old Stuff*, recorded live for radio broadcast in Denmark '65, all the more valuable. It's gloriously rough and ramshackle, fiery and a little feral in a vivid area wherein free, hard bop, and cool coincide/collide, with Rudd's 'bone encompassing jazz history from N'awlins to Jupiter, JT's sax tart and lithe, and Moholo and fill-in bassist Finn von Eyben make a mighty volcanic rumble.
 cuneiformrecords.com

Pianist Burton Greene was one of the leading lights of the 1960s NYC avant-jazz scene and is still active currently (as are Rudd, Tchicai, Graves, Workman, Davis, and Moholo). *Woodstock Playhouse 1965* is a pre-

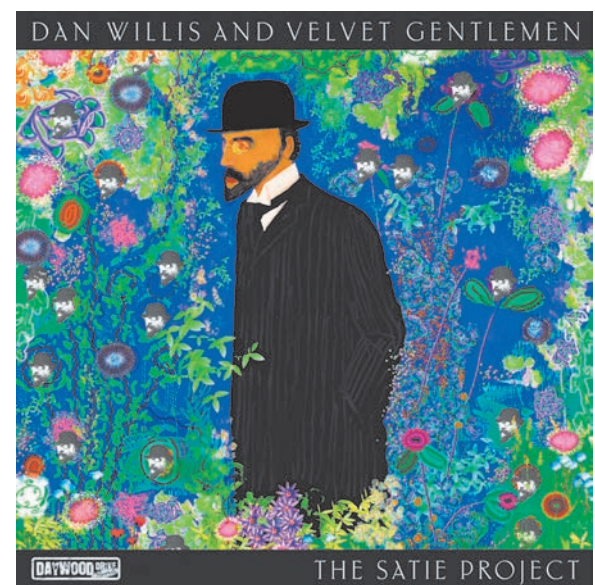
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viously unreleased performance with the great alto saxophonist Marion Brown, bassist Reggie Johnson, and the late Rashied Ali (who was in Coltrane's last band). About half of *Playhouse* evokes, of all things, a free-er version of the classic Dave Brubeck Quartet featuring Paul Desmond—percussive piano, dryly bittersweet sax, and genially lyrical. The remaining slightly-more-than-half is a totally free improvisation—there are peaks and there are valleys, moments of exciting confluence and moments of water-treading. Both discs are recommended for enthusiasts of the '60s out/free/cutting-edge jazz continuum. (Fyi: Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore is one such devotee.) porterrecords.com

Dan Willis and Velvet Gentlemen ★★★★★
The Satie Project
 Daywood Drive

Of all the grand daddies of 20th century classical music—such as Stravinsky, Cage, Glass, Ligeti, etc.—the great French fellow Erik Satie (1866-1925) sometimes gets left out. Perhaps because he passed 25 years into the 20th or that his piano music is so darn (accessibly) pretty, whatever. Satie combined a brainy yet alluring, witty modernism with Parisian elegance, to an extent building the doorways that Cage, Glass, Frank Zappa, and Brian Eno would later walk through. NYC saxophonist/multi-woodwinds player Dan Willis realizes this, and has recast 15 Satie pieces (and excerpts thereof/therein) for a medium-sized group (winds, keys, guitar, violin, bass, drums). It is, I daresay, brilliant—“Idylle” sizzles and seethes feverishly like Zappa's *Wazoo* genially thorny/twisty instrumentals, Soft Machine, and McLaughlin-era Tony Williams's *Lifetime*. (Guitarist Pete McCann burns here.) “Nocturne #3” and “Third Gymnopedie” brim over with yearning, bittersweet elegance. Like Satie, Willis values economy—soloing is heartfelt but terse, no tedious bather whatsoever. Chamber jazz, post-bop, fusion, classical-jazz crossover—*The Satie Project* is all of these things and something nearly new and unto itself. Unmissable! daywooddrive.com / danwillis.com



Nikola Kodjabashia ★★★★★
Explosion of a Memory
 ReR

Ned Rothenberg ★★★
Quintet For Clarinet and Strings
 Tzadik

Eliane Radigue ★★★★★
Triptych
 Important

The word on the street is that “classical” music sales are, in a world where Ashton Kutcher is an “actor” and Miley Cyrus tries not to be slutty, strictly diminutive spuds. Maybe that's because classical is perceived to be the rarefied (read: stick-up-the-hiney,

Ratings: ★=skip it; ★★=mediocre; ★★★=good; ★★★★=excellent; ★★★★★=classic



Nikola Kodjabashia.

snobby) zone of Dead White Guys' music...further, too few get to hear the stuff. That's just not right, Dear Reader—and I'm gonna do something about it.

Nikola Kodjabashia (b. 1970) is from Macedonia, somewhere in the used-to-be Yugoslavia (near Greece). *Explosion of a Memory* consists of four compositions for full orchestra, with NK contributing piano and avant-rock legend Chris Cutler (Henry Cow, Pere Ubu) percussion. Most of this disc is rich, lush, melodious—it contains hints of Macedonian folk strains and echoes of Copeland (bright, modern-pastoral) and Mahler (Euro-pastoral, density, hints of brittleness). It's beautifully accessible and accessibly beautiful, with wry, pensive rumblings beneath the surface. rerusa.com

New Yorker Ned Rothenberg (b. 1956) is best known as a protean jazz player of woodwinds—assorted saxophones, flutes, and clarinets. His *Quintet* is for clarinet (played by him) and string quartet, inspired by the similarly-scored works of

Mozart and Brahms—which isn't to imply retro-ness. While it has some of the refined, heart-swelling elegance of those deceased Caucasians, it's also prickly-modern, although not in an overly off-putting manner. There are aspects of classical/jazz fusion (improvisation, polyrhythms) a la Jimmy Giuffre, Gunther Schuller, and ol' rockin' Leonard Bernstein, some dissonances that are more clever, tantalizing, and charming

than lease-breaking and/or annoying. Rothenberg's clarinet is amber-hued, witty, and bristly, a touch Thelonious Monk-like. A fascinating and enthralling listen. tzadik.com

Frenchwoman Eliane Radigue (b. 1932) learned from early electronic music masters Pierre Henry and Pierre Schaeffer in the late '50s. After study in NY and California, Radigue graduated to magnetic tape, the Arp synthesizer, and Buddhism. She also embraced minimalism, though a minimalism very different from Glass, Reich, (John) Adams, and (Terry) Riley. From 1978, *Triptych* is a three-part, 60+ minutes of un-hurriedly paced, vividly



Ned Rothenberg. Photo: Lois Ellison

meditative set of soothingly undulating drones. For some folks, this disc might be like listening to an electric fan (a very Zen fan, I might add) or an egg; for others, a serene journey to the center of the Cosmic Whatsit within you, without you. If you enjoy Brian Eno, Alvin Lucier, and similar purveyors of drone, or eavesdropping on flowers embracing the morning sun, don't miss this—crank it up and chill. importantrecords.com ■



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