

CD REVIEW:
NO END NOW: Pieces Together
January, 2012

I wasn't sure what to expect as I settled in to listen to this instrumental disc from Palm Harbor trio, No End of Now. Knowing it was improvised, it was clear to me going in that either it was going to be brilliant - or that it most decidedly wouldn't. I'm pleased to report that I am having a delightful and mystical experience with this music.

What struck me right away is that these fine players understand the most important thing to use in improvisation - your ears. Guitarist Rex Shepherd, percussive and computer whiz Justin Wierbonski and bassist John Tschirhart have a tightly integrated synergy; one that allows them to explore with fearless abandon, giving the listener a sense of purpose, a sense of journey, and yet an utter certainty that nobody is lost. Wierbonski's computer-generated ministrations serve as a fundamental platform from which spring flights of adventure and fancy; seemingly influenced by every musical style and geographic sensibility that has come along in the last 60 or so years.

Made very palatable by the seamless and pristine recording by Daniel "Dangerous" Holsinger at Clear Track Studios in Clearwater, the CD ripples with energy and mood. The tribal affectation of "Sacred Dance" seethes with mystery and salvation. "The Ghost of a Past Life" is an avant garde, futuristic drone; awash in dissonant yet utterly pleasing textures. "Cause and Effect" savors the waning moments of "Ghost..." and continues meandering still further in an arrhythmic, melancholy creak, featuring the protein-laden interpretations of bassist Tschirhart. The title track settles into a loping, slightly menacing walking groove, prompting guitarist Shepherd to mirror with a light-footed dance. "Time Piece" is a more mechanized chant that grows more and more urgent as it progresses...

Each piece builds upon the one before it, and as you get all the way through the aforementioned pieces, through the mesmerizing and comforting "Equanimity", through the ominous and disjointed beauty of "No Answer Given", to the final loping and demonstrative "Nothing More To Say", you discover that this is not so much nine improvised pieces as it is one body of work. I must say that you can't ask a whole lot more of an album. It has a spiritual beginning, middle and end. It is one multi-course sonic meal.

I believe that much of this album was one long, endless take; which makes it more enchanting; seeing this band do this material live with this high level of intelligence and facility would be a wondrous event. This is music for the adventuresome ear, for the intellectually inquisitive, for the creatively hungry. This trio has something too, which few bands can really claim: a wholly unique and original approach, with completely unique ideas from top to bottom. The more I listened, the more impressed I was. It is not easy music to listen to; it challenges you, dares you to follow on the journey. It dares to be outside and experimental; yet is fundamentally as solid and grounded as you can get. It is dark, yet aglow with delighted energy. I am well and truly pleased.

-Phil Traynor