

CD BOX SET (13 CDs) MOONTOWER FOUNDATION RELEASE: DEC22 2012

Hayden Chisholm – 13 Views Of The Heart's Cargo / View Video Documentary

Chisholm elected to begin the collection with a disc called “**Love in Numbers**”. Mainly using overdubs he creates some otherworldly sounds with his layered altos. There is more than a bit of math involved in this piece utilizing Fibonacci numbers and Chisholm himself writes a long introduction in the 76 page booklet to this piece which he dubs his “personal obsession since 2 years”. Speaking with ex NY Times critic Karl Gann I understand that his work here is radical indeed and that no one has before ventured so far in the Fibonacci/overtone row but even without the number background, the subtle execution of the music and the tasteful silences between the sounds perfectly set the mood for many of the discs to come.

“**The Rabbit's Dream of the Inner Mongolia**” is the second in the collection and on it Chisholm's alto mixes seamlessly with the Guzeng of **Fengxia Xu**. Excerpts from Chisholm's long poem in the booklet form titles for the individual pieces which were recorded by night in the legendary Radio Hall in Bremen. It is seldom that jazz players like Chisholm are able to execute such exotic musical textures with such integrity and conviction. I can think of Richard Scott's “Music of Zen Meditation” recording from the 60's as standing out. This duo outing is every bit as authentic and moving and an emotional voyage.

On the third disc “**Nearness Live**” we are reminded clearly of his musical heritage as the young Chisholm was raised with Jazz on the west coast of New Zealand, albeit with a strong Dixie flavor. The Jazz trio format has always been one of his favorites and Chisholm has a chance on this one to embark on some epic lyrical flights over the glorious rhythm section of **Mat Penman** and **Jochen Rückert**. Both hailing from New Zealand and having racked up over two decades of playing together, Penman and Chisholm show there is a high level of musical telepathy between the two. Although the tracks bear Chisholm titles he is clearly tapping in to the long jazz tradition of improvising over known chord changes. In a Chisholm-like twist of form, he reverses the melody “There will never be another you” and then plays the result backwards to give us the original theme again- a telling gesture from the alto man.

The booklet gives us, the listener, many a precious insight into the recordings. The 4th disc “**Lula Pena and Hayden Chisholm Live in Berlin**” features the haunting voice of Portuguese singer **Lula Pena** and Chisholm describes in his text the long years it took for him to find the source of the voice he had once heard and admired until finally they were able to play together. This disc is one of their 5 live recordings in the collection and although one can pick up the odd bottle falling or a fragment of conversation (something I also heard recently on Bill Evans' sides) the music is powerful enough to leave the listener feeling like he was in the room on that freezing Berlin night. It is remarkable how Chisholm is able to play his alto on the very threshold to silence where breath and tone meet, giving ample space for his musical partners to sing out.

In a radical stylistic turn, disc 5 sees Chisholm tackling the oeuvre of **Josef Haydn**, re-composing and re-interpreting selected works from the great classicist: “**Hayden plays Haydn**”. A daring move and one that not surprisingly, given the prodigious techniques of Chisholm and pianist **Simon Nabatov**, comes off delightfully. Chisholm's delicate tone lends itself well to the pieces and the interplay between the two players is for the full 70 minutes on the level of the telepathic. Chisholm's deep overtone chanting completely overhauls “The Creation” and there is again some playful retrograde work with some well-known classics such as the German National Hymn.

“**Mute Density**” is another live recording made with the young lions from the **Lucern Jazz Orchestra**. Chisholm's daring score for the band is nothing like I have ever heard before in the Big Band idiom, injecting microtonal clusters and alternate tunings, and stretching the tonal possibilities of the band to their limits. There are some movements which evoke Gil Evans and third stream elements but the final result is something completely unique and very much in the stylistic modus operandi of Chisholm. The piece “Cluster Swing” is for me an instant classic.

Since his debut recording “Circe”(1996), Chisholm had not, to my knowledge, reached for the soprano. The trio outing however of “**Fragmented Teaching**”, disc 7 in the box, sees him draw on this horn and write some gorgeous new works for the Rhodes/drums/sax set-up. There are some unabashedly romantic moments such as the theme to “Geminesque” or the highly emotional “Fly”. The piece “Fragmented Teaching” sounds to me like a musical summit meeting between Paul Desmond and Morton Feldman. There is often a deep underlying conceptual framework beneath the deceptively simple jazz structures above.

When I asked the saxist about the inclusion of “**The Dharma Cowboy**”, the 8th disc, he replied “ I know there is no sax on it and some people might wonder about that, but I see myself as an improviser with or without my horn and this is what I sound like when I'm improvising with my voice alone, simple as that”. Well if he really is, there is certainly poetry in abundance here and he is supported expertly by a host of musicians that have obviously had some solid country and western experience. “The Dharma Cowboy” remains an enigma for me but that is perhaps what he meant it to be.

“**The Life of Hands in Love**” is disc 9 on the collection and contains some of the oldest combo tracks dating back to 2002. Already here Chisholm's sound and concepts were maturing and the reduction of material to its absolute essence was already a major factor. Though the thread through all of these sides is the saxophone of Chisholm it is interesting to note how the other musicians adjust their sounds and playing masterfully to align themselves with his musical world. The multi-instrumentalist **John Schröder** is featured on this disc as well as the microtonal trumpet of **Franz Hautzinger**, another fiercely individual voice.

MT10 gifts the listener with the debut concert of “**BREVE**” featuring the great British pianist **John Taylor** in the old stone church of the village of Plush in Dorset. Penman, Taylor and Chisholm all threw their own compositions into the mix and the joy shared by the trio on this outing can easily be heard. Penman's ballad “Slow Gambol” is simply gorgeous and the light touch of Taylor blends sublimely with Chisholm's Alto.

Disc 11, in Chisholm's own somewhat coy liner, notes: “My Sruti box is a small laptop-sized wooden drone instrument originating from India that has become very dear to me. Last year I discovered a way to play my saxophone and the Sruti box at the same time. Since then I have enjoyed their dialogue together.” Coy in the sense that, that which the recording yields is a veritable tour de force of western raga, if there even was such a concept before. John Cage had already conceived of ragas that were open for interpretation on the part of the performer. But in this outing Chisholm goes a step further, effortlessly gliding around the horn as he merges the overtone based tuning of India with the freedom of transposition championed in the Western tradition. A truly radical gesture despite the understatement of his composition notes to “**The Well Tempered Sruti Box**”.

“**Auto-Poetica, Works for Saxophone**” documents Chisholm's saxophone ensemble compositions, developed during his 8 years of summer master classes in Greece. The structures often employ his microtonal saxophone fingerings which he had already notated in the mid 90's. Eight Alto Saxophonists play together on this outing and again I am reminded of Morton Feldman-like tempos in which the restlessly inquisitive mind of Chisholm pushes the tonal possibilities of his instrument as far as he possibly can. He constantly rides the cusp of the wave between dissonance and consonance and tests our very own definitions of the two.

And so we arrive at the end of an almost 13 hour sound voyage through the wickedly winding creative delta of Chisholm. “**My Blood flows from Scotland to Armenia**” sees Chisholm reaching for the tenor on some free interpretations of Scottish melodies, delightful in their nuance and lightness. The restless guitar of Schröder is the perfect antipode to Chisholm's pure lyricism and the two soar over the folk forms. The last track will surely be a surprise to all as Chisholm's alto blends with the crystal sound bowls of **Pina Bettina Rücker** to end the prodigious trip with a beautiful counterpoint to the first disc. Again, otherworldly is the adjective that springs to mind.

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