

SHORT TAKES

PORTLAND, OR—The latest word regarding Portland Jazz venues is that the (always noisy but much beloved) Tug Boat Brewing Co. is no longer presenting music/performance at their little brewpub. It's a loss for the locals, for sure. There was almost always something going on in its cozy confines. Much of it was Jazz/improvisation oriented and much of it was good. A wide array of talented musicians from all over the globe played there as well as almost everyone in Portland at one time or another. I've mentioned before that local tenor sax man **Rich Halley** was a regular and on 5/7 he was on their stage for one last blast featuring his Outside Music Ensemble. The group features Rich with **Michael Vlatkovich** (tbn), **Troy Grugett** (as, bs), **Jim Knodle** (tpt), **Carson Halley** and **Dave Storrs** (d/perc) and **Andre St. James** (b). The next day they played the Silverton Jazz Festival in picturesque Willamette Valley countryside southeast of Portland. This ensemble will be playing again at Powell Butte Nature Park in Southeast Portland on July 17. A week later, 7/24, the Rich Halley trio (with Carson Halley and B.C. bassist **Clyde Reed**) will be joined by multi-reed meister **Vinny Golia** at Tabor Space (5441 SE Belmont). At that same venue poet/historian **Robert Briggs** recently presented another "chapter" of his ruminations on the Beat era: "Zen and the Kerouac curse upon 4" with accompaniment by **J. Stuart Fessant**, **Dan Davis**, and **Tim DuRoche**. And before that **Doug Theriault** (elec), **Matt Hannafin** (perc/elec), and **Kelvin Pittman** (sax) presented solo/trio sets ... 4/2: The Creative Music Guild (CMG) hosted a great show at Tabor Space. The newly minted HNK

With Chuck the music shaped as trios with Reggie Workman and I was on my way to building a language, slowly but surely.

With Fred Hopkins and Thurman Barker, the ensemble instrumentation became more important for change. And with the chamber groups with Reggie Workman, Tom Varner, and Jason Hwang, and secondly with Kevin Norton, Tomas Ulrich, and Masahiko Kono, I was exploring color and ensemble without traditional percussion.

But mostly I discovered not only the freedom of spontaneous composition, but I also felt as though this area needed more exploration as a valid form of composing bodies of work. I was struck with the beauty of having faith that music could grow and mature under such immediate circumstances. And the eastern side of thought, particularly Zen thought, allowed the music to flow freely yet be viewed, edited, and manipulated to complete a thought in pure spontaneity. Like watching a tree from seed to death. Time was relative to the duration of any piece of music or any life form's existence. A forty-minute concert was the tree and could be viewed in movements which developed throughout its life span.

I have played duets with shakuhachi and voice, composed for a large dance ensemble in Japan, recorded multi tracks of keyboard sounds to create very interesting compositions, added conversations and recitation while playing my instrument, etc. I would like to work with large orchestras that have written music as I relate improvisationally to it. One project I did had my quartet playing with a natural recording of mobbing crows, large bull frogs, and white-handed gibbons. There is a relationship in music that can connect to any source of life sound and draw upon it to bring out its beauty and extend its vision of the world.

I collaborate with painters in live performances and have been painting for quite a few years. I also enjoy writing essays, poems, and kotowazas (sayings). Every aspect of creativity is fuel for the music. And above all, survival is the most creative process of all.

I was looking for a less abstract answer. For instance, on Bridge Over the X-Stream (Leo Records, January 1999), the French horn player, Tom Varner, sounds ill at ease with the free context. Whereas Jason Hwang's playing is apt for the setting.

I don't think you can really consider anything more abstract than four musicians composing a piece of music at the same time in such an immediate way. It's like saying there is a less than abstract way to describe what many people call God. Faith is abstract by its very nature.

In Dixieland music musicians played and soloed sometimes three or four instruments at the same time. I saw it when I was seventeen years old in New Orleans. This music is similar and comes from the roots of music where more than one instrument is soloing at the same time. The rhythms and harmony and instrumentation may change but not the interacting elements we've picked up from these roots.

Varner's language is different than mine or Jason's or Reggie's (Workman). He brings traditional Jazz phrases from Bebop and post Bop but also uses extended techniques and understands twentieth century composers. He has perfect pitch and many times would repeat note for note a phrase that I played before him. Jason's interest in Asian music and philosophy and his more abstract approach is like adding a color to bring out the beauty of another color. Sometimes percussively the two of them make wonderful sounds that sputter and churn and click. A lot of fun to listen to.