



Nils Wogram & Root 70

Listen to your woman

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One of the most original jazz formations in Europe – Nils Wogram & Root 70 – is now releasing a blues concept album! On “Listen to Your Woman”, the German-New Zealand quartet presents eleven of their own ingenious, unparalleled compositions.

These are no softened-up jazz standards steeped in honey. Neither are they cerebral avant-garde for elite circles. These lads open up new jazz horizons with their unconventional ideas and technical brilliance, and yet the audience doesn't need a doctoral degree to enjoy the music. The very album title is clever: “Listen to Your Woman”. This advice will not only rescue peace in the household, but also reveal where the next 75 minutes will lead: between the lines, to the heart of the matter, and deep into the diverse ways to play the blues.

That is how the album, consisting mostly of first takes, begins: with the high spirited “**Rusty Bagpipe Boogie**”. Even though the name stands for an unusual sexual act, the song sounds more like a cozy drive in a rickety, but no less cool automobile. In any case, listeners will think they can hear the slow intercourse traffic and the maxing-out of all the gears.

“**One for George**” follows – a very agitated piece that Wogram wrote to honor the death of the jazz musician George Russel and that hints at a moving life full of energy and an urge to act, with its many changes of tempo and ambitious runs. In songs like this one, nimble solos make every chant superfluous. For here, but also on tracks such as “**How Play Blues**” or the titular “**Listen to Your Woman**”, which Wogram has dedicated to his wife, the instruments tell the stories: at times gossiping, cursing or laughing, at other times mourning, whispering and thoughtful. Here, the contrabass bathes in melancholy, while the trombone gives him a piece of his mind.

Only on two songs can Hayden Chisholm's striking speaking voice be heard: these would be, on the one hand, the mournful blues “**Homeland's Sky**”, whose cool atmosphere reminds one of black-and-white detective films, and, on the other, “**Melancholia**”. Being at the end of the album, this song sounds like it boots out the listeners: it sends the guests home to a tottering swing beat – and yet not without giving them a few contemplative words on the way home. But before this successful end has been set, we experience how the quartet ties in to their last concept album, *Root 70 on 52nd ¼ Street*: To give free reign to its joy of playing, the team falls back on 24 quarter, instead of 12 halftone steps, per octave. This may sound complicated, but it grooves without fail.

Another surprise comes from “**Hot Summer Blues**”: overtone song and horn-similar trombone thrusts conjure up a far-eastern, nearly monastic atmosphere, before the brass and rhythm fraction begin to prey on each other and end the peace with a wild battue. “**Behind the Heart Beat**” begins as a heavily grooving reggae, characterized by Jamaican melodies, unperturbed plodding bass and lightly dancing drums. As the title betrays, there is more to discover: a swingy blues part, which is cleverly embedded in the piece and sparkles thanks to a soulful trombone solo.

“Erectile Dysfunction” demands to be heard on account of meshing intricate rhythms, off-center melody and sophisticated solos. Before the album peaks at **“Melancholia”**, however, the band takes off its gloves in **“Precision”**. The tempo changes between quick swing and moderate funk, driving the trombone, bass and saxophone to daring runs.

In a nutshell: Nils Wogram & Root 70 have helped the blues out of its corset on their concept album **“Listen to Your Woman”**, such that an entirely new genre can unfold freely in all of its facets.

“Listen to Your Woman” was recorded live and analog by Oliver Bergner in the broadcasting studio Nalepastrasse (Studio P4) in January 2010, the former headquarters of the East German Broadcasting Service.