

MR. STU'S RECORD ROOM (USA), AUGUST 2019 Rezension von Stuart Kremsky

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Luca Sisera ROOFER: Starlex Complex



Bassist Luca Sisera writes boldly complicated music for **Luca Sisera ROOFER**, his quintet with a front line of Marcus Twerenbold on trombone and Michael Jaeger on tenor sax, and a rhythm section of Sisera, pianist Yves Theiler, and drummer Michi Stulz. I've wondered about the band's name, and the press release for *Starlex Complex*, the group's third release, finally answers that question. Pirmin Bossart writes that "so-called 'roofers' are climbers who clamber up high structures without safety equipment ..." which makes perfect metaphorical sense for this wild and woolly compositions of Sisera and the utterly fearless performances of his band. When I reviewed the band's first CD (*Prospect*, Leo Records, 2014), I wrote the listener can "never be exactly sure where the tunes are headed, but [one] can trust this unit to make the process a hell of a lot of fun." A few years later, and with more playing time as a group, that statement seems more true than ever. The individual parts may not be too daunting, but the ways that Sisera puts them together are usually surprising and unexpected. It's harder than usual to describe Sisera's music in words, but let me try. The staccato theme of *Starlex Complex* quickly leads into a long boppish theme voiced by Twerenbold and Jaeger over the high-stepping rhythm section before the trombonist breaks the spell for a dark-toned solo. He's joined by Jaeger for a duel of solos while piano, bass, and drums grow agitated and aggressive. As the rhythms calm down, Twerenbold takes over again and the piece abruptly comes to a halt. That description just begins to scratch the surface of what's going on. This is music that demands and rewards repeated close listenings to appreciate the details of what Sisera and his bandmates are up to. The second track is the carefully paced *Internal Body Messenger*. That yields to the exuberant *Struggle Bubble*, with a theme that reminds me of Stevie Wonder's *Sir Duke*, of all things, before moving on to an almost giddy group improvisation with a busily propulsive bass solo. The already blurred line between composition and improvisation is essentially erased for the spacy *Nairs*, seven minutes of whooshes, blurs, and cymbal hits. Until the last minute, there are occasional stately piano chords that are thrown in, seemingly at random, could come from a different piece altogether. But all of a sudden, Theiler's piano grows more assertive and moves to the forefront in what amounts to a musical coup. *Mama Helix* is a favorite of mine. This starkly dramatic and swirling piece has parts that fit together in the strangest ways. There's a section that features a trombone and saxophone chase, a lush solo piano interlude, and inspired drumming by Stulz. *Missing Chan(n)els Part 1* offers a sweetly conversational bass solo before heading directly into *Part 2*, a upbeat bebop theme with a tenor solo that's languid at first, slowly building up to some more intense playing. A similarly constructed piano solo follows, energetically supported by Sisera and Stulz. Making her only appearance on the date, Isa Weiss swoops in with some wordless vocalizing for *Missing Chan(n)els Part 3*, soaring above and harmonizing with trombonist Twerenbold and saxophonist Jaeger over a busy vamp by the rhythm section. *Starlex Extro*, a brief collective improvisation, concludes the disc with a sense of unresolved mystery. In sum, another exciting and absorbing collection from this endlessly provocative Swiss ensemble. Definitely recommended.

nWog 023; Marcus Twerenbold (tbn) Michael Jaeger (ts) Yves Theiler (p) Luca Sisera (b) Michi Stulz (d) Isa Weiss (vcl on *); Winterthur, Switzerland, October 29-31, 2018; *Starlex Complex/ Internal Body Messenger/ Struggle Bubble/ Nairs/ Mama Helix/ Missing Chan(n)els Part 1/ Missing Chan(n)els Part 2/ Missing Chan(n)els Part 3*/ Starlex Extro*; 47:25. www.nwog-records.com