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Lung
Little Women (AUM Fidelity)
by Terrell Holmes

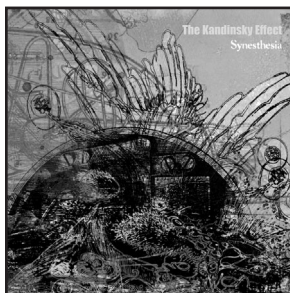
The quartet Little Women has earned a reputation for not only playing outside the box but dragging it into the driveway and trampling it gleefully. The band steps lively again on *Lung*, an album whose single track is measured, raucous, eccentric, traditional, startling and thoroughly engaging.

Lung begins with the barely perceptible sound of breathing, which underscores the overall theme (and probably helped the bandmembers relax and loosen up for what they were preparing to unleash). Soft, insistent cymbals by drummer Jason Nazary lead into a lullaby played by Travis Laplante (tenor), Darius Jones (alto) and Andrew Smiley (guitar). One by one the instruments fall away and the band raises its voice in a sustained single-note non-instrumental phrase, one of several diverse musical transitions that take place throughout the album. And with a strident horn/guitar blast, the gloves come off.

Lung has everything. Tempo shifts between racehorse velocity and metronome steadiness. There's total group interplay, combative duos and impressionistic trios, all involving fascinating instrument combinations. Comparatively calm interludes are razed by ferocious solos. Straightahead playing, where the band jams vigorously in a standard quartet style, almost seems to be a con, given the band's pedigree. Little Women's signature move, however, is frenetic free playing, particularly where each member appears to improvise independently but is, in fact, contributing to a coordinated group dynamic.

Laplante and Jones are ferocious. Their horns are sometimes bold and defiant and at other times tortured and pleading, wailing for salvation or absolution. Fire and brimstone pours from Nazary's drum kit and Smiley's alchemy on the guitar is vicious enough to summon the devil. What's important to note about *Lung*, though, is that free doesn't mean undisciplined or without structure. Think of one of Coltrane's large ensemble works scaled down and with occasional rock guitar highlights. Little Women definitely play with a plan; it's just that they don't necessarily play by the rules all the time.

For more information, visit aumfidelity.com. This group is at Ibeam Brooklyn Jun. 14th. See Calendar.



Synesthesia
The Kandinsky Effect (Cuneiform)
by Wilbur MacKenzie

Few trends in popular music have made such an indelible impression on modern jazz as '90s innovations in drum-n-bass. The fragmented, lightning-paced beats of Squarepusher and Aphex Twin have been gleefully appropriated by today's generation of percussionists and the proliferation of effects pedals have made it

possible for single-line instruments to create the same electronic soundscapes once the signature of analog synthesizers. Paris/New York trio The Kandinsky Effect takes this approach, firmly grounding their electronic and rhythmic ideas in solid musicianship.

Their debut album opens with "Johnny Utah", with a great bass/drums hookup and some slick saxophone harmonizer effects. "M.C." follows, confirming that the band has a solid direction in mind sonically. "Cusba" is a ballad, saxophonist Warren Walker's breathy tone painting pastille impressionistic strokes across Gaël Petrina's repetitive bass figure. "KW51" introduces some more atmospheric territory before settling into a solid midtempo groove. Drummer Caleb Dolister shines on this track in particular, his diverse palette of sounds creating a colorful drumbeat truly reminiscent of some of Aphex Twin's midtempo tracks. Petrina leads things off on "Brighton", a beautiful track driven by contrapuntal bass harmonies.

Some tracks sound like a document of a performance while others (or even certain sections of the same song) have that 'in your head' sound rarely associated with a well-recorded jazz disc. For a stark juxtaposition of these approaches, look no further than the consecutive tracks "Leftover Shoes" and "Lobi Mobi / Hotel 66", the former coming off like a DJ remix, laden in electronic drums and reverby saxophone, the latter sounding like a hi-fi live track.

There is a fundamental expectation that a jazz record will be a document of a performance, as opposed to a sonic construction unto itself. The Kandinsky Effect does an amazing job of creating something that satisfies a listener's expectations for both.

For more information, visit cuneiformrecords.com. This group is at Drom Jun. 15th. See Calendar.

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