

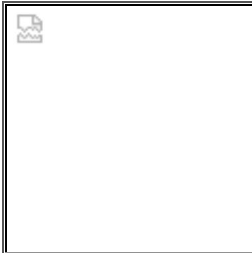
J A Z Z w o r d

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Remi Álvarez Quartet

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Live at Vision Festival
ReKonsttruct re: 058

Remi Álvarez/Ingebrigt Håker Flaten

First Duet Live

JaZt Tapes CD-034

Probably no North American improv scene is as unknown as the Mexican one. Sure the major achievements of some Canadian players are underappreciated south of the 49th parallel, but since so many Canadian cities are near the American border, there's frequent Can-Am interaction. Mexico is another matter. Unlike most Canadians, Hispanic Mexicans are easy to identify – ask the police in Arizona – limiting the number of quasi-legal gigs in the U.S. Undaunted though, a small community of musical experimenters survives. These CDs capture one veteran – reedist Remi Álvarez – in different American settings. During his almost 30 year career, Álvarez, who is a saxophone and jazz workshop professor at UNAM's National School of Music, has travelled internationally, led a variety of bands and recorded with the likes of bassists Mark Dresser and drummer Harvey Sorgen

First Duet Live finds the Mexican reedist in San Antonio, in a duo setting with Norwegian bassist Ingebrigt Håker Flaten, who now lives in Houston. Well-travelled and always busy, Håker Flaten often works with other saxophonists including Joe McPhee and Mats Gustafsson. As frenetic as the Texas session is laid back, Live at Vision Festival puts Álvarez in the company of three of New York's busiest players, guitarist Dom Minasi, bassist Ken Filiano and drummer Michael T.A. Thompson, who singly or together have played with everyone from saxophonist Charles Gayle to pianist Connie Crothers.

Leaving enough space for Álvarez's skills on tenor saxophone and flute, the New Yorkers bring out his most piercing and comprehensive playing, constantly moving forward with intense snorts, honks, yelps and shrieks. With textures rotating around one another, the drummer smacks, chops, ruffs and drags; the bassist squeezes and rubs abrasive vibrations from the top and bottom of his strings, using both focused fingering and slip-sliding bowing; while the guitarist bends and slurs his strings when his fleet comping isn't backing up the saxophonist.

The second improvisation reaches its climax when Filiano turns from wide-bowing to a walking bass line and Thompson's cymbal bops and press rolls take on a Latinesque tinge, perhaps in honor of the guest saxophonist. Álvarez's surprising squeaky flute solo and vocal cries are quickly traded in for tenor saxophone. Playing it his irregular vibrations are both mercurial and mellow; melding with Filiano's angled stopping. Minasi continues with shuddering chord patterns as well as finger picking as Thompson's smacks and chips knit together any dangling sequences.

Using tenor saxophone alone in San Antonio, 18 months previously, Álvarez's vibrating split tones, tongue slaps and elongated flutters provide the staccato tension that sets off bassist Håker Flaten's omni-directed rubs and stops. A portrait in moderation, the bassist has a rare ability to showcase staccato string stretches and ratcheting pops while maintaining a stentorian pulse. Meanwhile, like a cross border Martin & Lewis act, the saxophonist explosively and animatedly overblows, so that the resulting multiphonics encompass additional horn and breath partials. Meanwhile his original horn part is moving from dog-whistle-like altissimo to snarling glossolalia. Chiming bass strokes and linear

reed trills link the two sections.

Judging from the evidence here, Álvarez can easily hold his own with the best Europe and New York has to offer. He should get out more often.

--Ken Waxman

Track Listing: Live: 1. Improv #1 2. Improv # 2 3. Improv #3

Personnel: Live: Remi Álvarez (tenor saxophone and flute); Dom Minasi (guitar); Ken Filiano (bass) and Michael T.A. Thompson (drums)

Track Listing: First: 1. Introduction 2. First Duet 3. Second Duet 4. Third Duet

Personnel: First: Remi Álvarez (tenor saxophone) and Ingebrigt Håker Flaten (bass)

November 26, 3012