

Francois Houle & Joe Sorbara Hush



Hush - SoHo (Joe Sorbara & François Houle)

ezz-thetics: LC 91771

REVIEWS

-"Featuring Francois Houle on clarinet and Joe Sorbara on drums, table percussion & back porch piano guts. Vancouver-based musician/bandleader, Francois Houle has long been one the most dedicated, crafty and diverse clarinetists in all of Canada and

north America. Mr. Houle has had a number of great bands/projects: check out his work with Gordon Grdina, Benoit Delbeq and Tony Wilson. I don't know of percussionist Joe Sorbara as well, although I have heard him with Ken Aldcroft, Evan Parker and the AIM Orchestra. This disc was recorded in Vancouver & Toronto in November & December of 2020. This starts off with what sounds like Mr. Sorbara playing the strings inside an old piano with Mr. Houle's clarinet carefully conversing. The overall sound is rather spooky and filled suspense. I love the sound here, as the disc is superbly produced. Mr. Houle's ever-expressive clarinet is at the center with Mr. Sorbara's drums weaving or being panned to either side of the sound spectrum. Both musicians appear to be exploring different ways of playing their respective instruments. Houle combines some klez-like licks, slightly further out lower case sounds and many sounds which are free of easy recognized genres. Sorbara also deals with a number of odd minimalist percussives on drums, gongs, cymbals, pieces of wood & metal, always cautious to never do too much. *The duo play together extremely well as one force.* Houle keeps coming up with assorted thematic material, spicy runs which are tightly orchestrated /matched by Sorbara's ever-shifting drumming. There is also some occasional playfulness which balances just right with the other further out explorations: twisted clarinet runs with eerie bowed cymbals or similar weird sounds. Although this is a duo effort, these two musicians often sound like an entire band of gifted improvisers."

— Bruce Lee Gallanter, downtownmusicgallery.com

"A Canadian clarinetist and percussionist pairing that achieves a supernal sympathy.

Houle's melodic clarinet playing is reminiscent of Jimmy Giuffre's folksy lyricism, but on other tracks he treats his instrument as a resourceful noise generator. Sorbara's brushes complement Houle's breath sounds on 'Stool Pigeon'. 'Coded Whisper' is a beautiful Giuffre-like folk blues; 'Knocked Ambulations' features haunting clarinet squawks and squeaks, interior piano sounds and ambient crickets. Gamelan-like small instruments inflect the clarinet's fluttering lines on 'What Next? (for Ron Gaskin)', while 'Montgolfière' is replete with growls, vocalisations and, appropriately, balloon effects, whose origins remain obscure. Master musicians and a dream duo."
— Andy Hamilton, [The Wire](#)

"With masterful technique and remarkable creative drive, the Canadian duo of clarinetist François Houle and Joe Sorbara explore unorthodox sound worlds through microtones, pad percussives, circular breathing to stretch phrasing, Houle taking apart his instrument to affect tone and pitch, and Sorbara using idiosyncratic percussive instruments including 'back porch piano guts'."
— [squidco.com](#)

"The music that has emerged from the duo of François Houle and Joe Sorbara comes to us from a remarkable vortex of unique experiences, memories, impulses, and techniques. Their past experiences can only be partially summarized. Houle has released dozens of recordings, collaborated with notable figures such as Marilyn Crispell, Evan Parker, Gerry Hemingway, Dave Douglas, and Myra Melford, examined the relationship of music and poetry with Catriona Strang, performed the music of Elliott Carter and Pierre Boulez, incorporated electronics into his instrumental palette, composed an alluring concerto for the clarinet, on which he has developed a virtuosic, ever-expanding technique. Sorbara has brought his vision of percussive sonorities to many Canadian ensembles that have explored various approaches to jazz, chamber music, and improvised settings, including essaying the music of Evan Parker, Anthony Braxton, Jimmy Giuffre, and Sun Ra, he has taught at a number of universities and colleges, and previously worked with François Houle in a trio format, Alien Radio."

— Art Lange, notes from HUSH (ezz-thetics by [HatHut](#) 1035)