

François Houle + Marco von Orelli
Make That Flight
ezz-Thetics 1032



Some of the great jazz combos of all time have as their main character the interplay between two horns. And without wanting to reduce this terrific duo to their primary influence, the enduring and much beloved John Carter/Bobby Bradford partnership is woven through all eleven tracks of this economical recording. I've long been a fan of Houle's exceptional clarinet work, and many readers will remember his marvelous 1998 recording *In the Vernacular*, where his quintet played Carter's music. Trumpeter and cornetist Marco von Orelli has recorded some equally vibrant group and solo music for *Hatology* in recent years. With a real sensitivity to tone, technique, and creative context, they embody the spirit of Carter and Bradford while avoiding mere imitation.

You don't have to wait long to appreciate the sumptuousness of Houle's tone, which is in the spotlight to open "Fake News." But when Von Orelli's cornet (his sole axe here) joins in, they move quickly from rapturous harmony and long tones to buzzing dialogue, register shifts, the works. And the moment when you realize the music is special is during von Orelli's first, shimmering solo, against which Houle plays multiphonics on a simple repeating phrase. That's the kind of intensity and deeply layered invention that characterize all eleven tracks. They range from the joyful, racing pieces like "Strade Monte Verita" or "Tandem" (a title shared by Carter and Bradford's duo recordings) to dark-hued tunes like "Essay."

Both players can turn on a dime, maximal exuberance and brio one second, gently vulnerable or even desolate the next. Three of the improvised pieces are for the painter Francis Bacon, who knew from the simultaneity of artistic freedom and abjection. And these two are comfortable living there, inside all

the cracks between notes and tones. "Zipline," for example, isn't about speed; it's about the experience of being suspended in air, with all the tension that comes with it. The title track is searching, almost resolute-sounding while it patiently seeks out lyricism. And the most extreme contrasts are heard on "Morning Song I," the closing track and also (at eight minutes) the longest.

If there's one beef I have with this record, it's that I wish bagatelles like the fascinating "For F." or "Mr. B" were longer. But with so many moments of delight, it's a wonderfully rich album that I hope is the first of many these two do together.

–**Jason Bivins**, *Point of Departure*

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