Joris Roelofs
Amateur Dentist

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Pirouet Records · PIT3090

Joris Roelofs · bass clarinet
Matt Penman · bass
Ted Poor · drums

10. Kyrie and Gloria
Intimacy and passion to play

Amateur Dentist: on their second PIROUET CD Dutch bass clarinetist Joris Roelofs and his trio partners bassist Matt Penman and drummer Ted Poor once again manage to surprise; with sounds that reverberate with shimmering colors, they fathom the possibilities of this unusual lineup. It all leads to an engaging musical world that is both fun and captivating.

He has left a trail with his deep-toned play. There was a lot of excitement over Aliens Deliberating, bass clarinetist Joris Roelofs’ 2014 debut album on PIROUET. The critic from Jazz ’n’ More discovered “the fascinating magic of the bass clarinet”. “Quite simply, a miniature masterpiece.” So said RONDO. Fono Forum praised a music with “radiance” and “urgency” that “cajoles with its full tones”, and Jazz Podium had an especially incisive summary: “a new arrival is coming to maturity, someone who may well soon be one of the greats,” someone who swings “like the bass clarinet devil.” Now Dutchman Roelofs brings out his second CD on PIROUET. Once again there’s a colorful,
The music on this CD amazes with an even richer variety of sounds than the first one. Its expressive power sparkles, bursting with intensity. The group seems almost Spartan, yet it’s a masterful ensemble, with bassist Matt Penman and drummer Ted Poor joining Roelofs.

Fans of straight-ahead, swinging jazz will be just as captivated by this album as lovers of subtle ‘chamber jazz’—music with more of a contemporary classical flair—will be. The trio’s desire to explore, their passion for playing is palpable.

Born in 1984, Roelofs graduated in 2007 with a master’s degree from the Amsterdam Conservatory of Music. Best known as an alto saxophonist and clarinetist, he received such prestigious awards as the Pim Jacobs Prize, and the US’s Stan Getz/Clifford Brown Fellowship. As a member of the Vienna Art Orchestra between 2005 and 2010, he was asked to play bass clarinet on particular pieces. He found the instrument so fascinating that he decided to stay with it, comparing it to a “new love”—a love that obviously still bursts into flames. Like Roelofs, both partners are quality players, comfortable in any milieu. Born in New Zealand in 1974, Matt Penman counts as one of the most sought after bassists on the New York scene. He works with the likes of Kenny Werner, Kurt Rosenwinkel, Wolfgang Muthspiel, Guillermo Klein, and Nils Wogram. His playing is born out of a mixture of power, pliability, and versatility. Ted Poor was born in the USA in 1981. In 2000, Poor, along with guitarist Ben Monder and trumpeter Ralph Alessi, grounded the interactive trio Third Wheel; a master communicator on the drums, he has played with Chris Potter, Bill Frisell, Marc Ducret, and Maria Schneider.
This trio is a marvel of changeability; they carry out “tremendous dynamic variations”, and their communication is both intimate and intense. There is a special appeal where-in two deep-toned melody instruments without the support of a harmony instrument such as piano or guitar meet in dialogue, using their entire tonal repertoire in order to cover the total tonal range. Roelofs says, “We have expanded our role-sharing. Bass and bass clarinet are more interlocked in the exchange between solo and accompaniment. I have also arranged a couple of classical pieces, one from Alexander Scriabin and one from Guillaume de Machaut, and have once again taken on an Ellington piece, *Such Sweet Thunder*, in which I try to fully utilize the sound possibilities, the dynamics and rhythmic flexibility of this trio.”

Systematic beauty. Just as with *Aliens Deliberating*, the pieces on *Amateur Dentist* have an exciting background. Roelofs formulates it this way: “The first piece, *Snakes and Eagles*, refers to Nietzsche’s book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in which the eagle (pride, power, strength) and the snake (wisdom, intellect) play an important role. *Pseudo Bebop* is a short interlude, and it got its name because it sounds vaguely like bebop, but the time is out of line, and the tones are all overtones. *Para Poli* means ‘too much’ in Greek. I’ve often been to Crete, and these are particular words that I especially like. Also, the piece has a lot of chords—almost too many. *Amateur Dentist* is another interlude. I like to let the fantasy run wild, and portray absurd things in the music. If we are successful with what we planned, it sounds
like a dentist feverishly at work as the drill pulsates and grinds. I like this best as the album’s title: on the one hand it’s something that no one was expecting, and on the other hand it brings very concrete pictures to mind. I had no intention of insulting dentists, by the way. It’s more a serious attempt to put myself in their shoes. Samurai Curtain actually comes from the Dutch word ‘Samenreiskorting’. This comes from the Dutch train service, and correctly translated means ‘reduced group fare’. After a Dutch conductor had accused Ted and Matt of not having bought a ‘Samenreiskorting’, and the two naturally not having understood a word, I asked them which English word sounded most like this strange Dutch expression. That’s how I came up with Samurai Curtain. Maybe that’s something that only the Dutch can laugh about.”

The music is even more fascinating than the titles. There is something tongue in cheek about the way the bowed bass takes over the melody line and the bass clarinet plays the recurring accompanying line on Such Sweet Thunder—a line that, naturally, the two trade back and forth. It’s another world when the same trio transforms the exhilaratingly lyrical cantilena from Russian composer Alexander Scriabin’s Piano Sonata No.1 into at first disturbing, then fragile, sublimely graceful tones. Then, the CD’s last piece, Kyrie, falls back on the first two sections of the Messe de Nostre Dame, Kyrie and Gloria, from the 14th century poet and composer Guillaume Machaut. In the trio’s sensitive hands, the piece merges into the contemporary jazz aesthetic. Intimacy and passion, head and heart, and a touch of humor combine for a moving musical experience.
Discography Joris Roelofs on Pirouet Records

2016  Joris Roelofs: Amateur Dentist (Joris Roelofs, bcl · Matt Penman, b · Ted Poor, dr) · PIT3090
2014  Joris Roelofs: Amateur Dentist (Joris Roelofs, bcl · Matt Penman, b · Ted Poor, dr) · PIT3076

CD Release Tour: Joris Roelofs live

12-04-2015  Nürnberg (DE) · Jazzstudio
12-06-2015  Zeeland (NL) · Muziekpodium
12-07-2015  Graz (AT) · Stockwerk Jazz
12-08-2015  Munich (DE) · Jazzclub Unterfahrt
12-10-2015  Baden (CH) · Kulak Jazz
12-11-2015  Antwerp (NL) · De Roma
12-12-2015  Amsterdam (NL) · Bimhuis
12-13-2015  The Hague (NL) · Theater Dakota

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