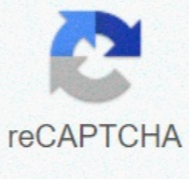




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The orchestron project

2013 live album by Pat MethenyThe Orchestrion ProjectLive album by Pat MethenyReleasedFebruary 11, 2013RecordedNovember 2010VenueSt. Elias Church, Greenpoint, Brooklyn, New YorkGenreJazzLength106:40LabelNonesuchProducerPat MethenyPat Metheny chronology
Unity Band(2012)
The Orchestrion Project(2013)
Tap: Book of Angels Volume 20(2013)
The Orchestrion Project is an album by American guitarist Pat Metheny released as a double CD in early 2013 on the Nonesuch label following the release of a concert video with the same name in 2012.[1][2] The album was recorded on tour following Orchestrion, Metheny's album from 2010 which used orchestronic instruments. Reception Professional ratingsReview scoresSourceRatingAllMusic[1]The Observer[3] The album received generally favorable reviews, with Metacritic giving it a score of 83% from 5 reviews.[4] AllMusic awarded the album 4 stars, and in its review Thom Jurek said, "While this album's predecessor evidenced his accomplishment in the instrument's creation and operation, The Orchestrion Project reveals that Metheny's possibilities with it have only been tapped".[1] Dave Gelly of The Observer said, "I have never heard anything quite like it".[3] BBC Music's Peter Marsh was less impressed stating "The Orchestrion is impressive when seen in action. But Metheny's use of it here delivers a pale, expensive shadow of what a real band can achieve. The project doesn't feel like it has longevity, and this release is for the hardcore only".[5] Track listing All tracks are written by Pat Metheny except where noted.Disc one:No.TitleWriter(s)Length1."Improvisation #1" 4:512."Antonia" 6:143."Entry Point" 10:274."Expansion" 8:435."Improvisation #2" 10:076."80-81/Broadway Blues"Pat Metheny, Ornette Coleman4:237."Orchestrion" 15:59 Disc two:No.TitleLength1."Soul Search"9:542."Spirit of the Air"8:383."Stranger in Town"5:394."Sueño con Mexico"8:535."Tell Her You Saw Me"5:176 "Unity Village"7:35 DVD:No.TitleWriter(s)Length1."Unity Village" 7:352."Orchestrion" 15:293."Entry Point" 10:274."Expansion" 8:435."Soul Search" 9:546."Spirit of the Air" 8:387."Sueño con Mexico" 8:538."Improvisation #2" 10:079."Stranger in Town" 5:3910."Improvisation #1" 4:5111."80-81/Broadway Blues"Pat Metheny, Ornette Coleman4:2312."Tell Her You Saw Me" 5:1713."Antonia" 6:14 Personnel Pat Metheny – acoustic and electric guitars, guitar synthesizer, orchestrionics
References
^ a b c Jurek, Thom. "Pat Metheny The Orchestrion Project - Review". Allmusic. Retrieved 2014-02-05.
^ "Discography of Pat Metheny". Retrieved 2014-02-05.
^ a b Gelly, D., Pat Metheny: The Orchestrion Project Review, The Observer, February 10, 2013
^ Metacritic summary, accessed February 5, 2014
^ Marsh, P. Pat Metheny: The Orchestrion Project Review, BBC Music, accessed February 5, 2014 Retrieved from " BY JOHN KELMAN February 5, 2013 Sign in to view read count With The Orchestrion Project (Eagle Eye Media, 2012), Pat Metheny provided a detailed visual look into the workings of the guitarist's complex, custom-built conglomeration of instruments—triggered by pneumatics, solenoids and computer programs—that took this orchestral successor to the player piano (the first known version being the panharmonicon, in 1805) not just into a new century, but a new millennium. An in-depth All About Jazz review of the DVD/Blu-Ray/3D Blu-Ray release, covered the history of the project and the music performed in what was, instead of an actual live performance from Metheny's 2010 world tour, a studio recording made in a lovely old church that included the same set list, but allowed the guitarist's directors more control over the detailed, multi-camera shoot.What the two-CD version of The Orchestrion Project allows, however, is to assess the significance of the order of events—how different a recording can be when the identical tracks are placed in a different sequence. For those of the iPod/iPhone/iPad generation who view a recording as nothing more than a collection of discrete songs to be listened to separately and shuffled around with other music this is, of course, an irrelevant discussion; but for those who still choose to take their recordings in as a whole, it is, however, a very germane one.Metheny could have simply issued The Orchestrion Project as the audio equivalent of the DVD/Blu-Ray. Instead, it's a completely different program: even the "Orchestrion Suite"—the five compositions from the original Orchestrion (Nonesuch, 2010) studio recording—is not just re-sequenced but broken up entirely. The balladic "Entry Point" and brighter "Expansion," with its synth-driven lines and Latin-seque solo section, are kept together but placed on the first CD after the more jagged, acoustic guitar-driven opener, "Improvisation #1," and lyrical "Antonia," originally from Metheny's ambitious Secret Story (Geffen, 1992, reissued Nonesuch, 2007). By breaking the suite up, Metheny effectively turns the original Orchestrion into discrete tracks that could be played separately in the future, now that they're no longer joined at the hip, becoming grist for an entirely different narrative.The re-sequencing of The Orchestrion Project's thirteen tunes makes this a completely different experience, with an altered emotional arc. "Unity Village," an enduring track from Metheny's first as a leader, 1976's Bright Size Life (ECM), opened the DVD but ends the CD, turning from an easy slip into, to a similarly smooth exit from the world of Metheny's Orchestrion. In between the narrative is also altered because of an unavoidable break between the two CDs. Orchestrion's title track acts just as successfully, here, as a conclusion to the first disc as it has traditionally been an album-opener, while "Soul Search" introduces the second CD with a dark-hued, quasi-bluesy and, ultimately, swinging-tone.Artists and producers often spend considerable time deciding how to sequence tracks into a cogent order, but there's oftentimes more than one choice. With The Orchestrion Project DVD and CD, it's a rare chance to hear just how different the same songs can be when shuffled into a different sequence; both with their individual charms and both with their individual strengths. CD1: Improvisation #1, Antonia, Entry Point, Expansion, Improvisation #2, 80/81 / Broadway Blues, Orchestrion. CD2: Soul Search, Spirit of the Air, Stranger in Town, Sueño con Mexico, Tell Her You Saw Me, Unity Village, Personnel Pat Metheny: acoustic and electric guitars, guitar synth, Pikasso 42-String guitar, Orchestrion. Album information Title: The Orchestrion Project | Year Released: 2013 | Record Label: Nonesuch Records Post a comment about this album Like the magicians of yore who invented chess playing automata that could defeat grandmasters, Metheny's Orchestrion is a creation of wonder, though one may equally wonder, er, why? As Metheny admits, the idea of a machine that can play a range of instruments – Metheny can fire off piano, percussion, drums, you name it, to accompany his various (and often looped) guitars – dates back to player pianos and mechanical orchestras of the 19th century. It makes him the fabbest one-man band ever and must save a fortune in beer and curry for the sidemen afterward (and the drummer never turns up smashed). What it allows Metheny to do is build up layers of sound, and no modern guitarist is more fascinated by harmony, so we are very much in Metheny-land, with ever spiraling harmonies and rhythms building around the man's own lyrical guitar leads. But ultimately the drum parts are simply repetitions, not grooves, and the keys sound especially soul-less. But this is a live recording and credit to Metheny as he rides his musical mount like Ben-Hur atop his four horses galloping round the Colosseum: there's no stopping him and for sheer bravery, (and ego), you have to tip your hat to the man. Metheny fans will be awestruck, others may more crudely mutter: "Shut up and play your guitar." NPR's sites use cookies, similar tracking and storage technologies, and information about the device you use to access our sites (together, "cookies") to enhance your viewing, listening and user experience, personalize content, personalize messages from NPR's sponsors, provide social media features, and analyze NPR's traffic. This information is shared with social media, sponsorship, analytics, and other vendors or service providers. See details. You may click on "Your Choices" below to learn about and use cookie management tools to limit use of cookies when you visit NPR's sites. You can adjust your cookie choices in those tools at any time. If you click "Agree and Continue" below, you acknowledge that your cookie choices in those tools will be respected and that you otherwise agree to the use of cookies on NPR's sites. YOUR CHOICES There's something very compelling about watching a guitar player make his art. Both the hands are at it, doing different things. The player is usually concentrating, but often not on the hands but on the music—out there somewhere in the aether, amidst music he is chasing with his instrument, a sound in his head that if he's lucky he can craft into existence with those six strings and with talent. As that inspiration moves from head to hands, from the abstract into actual sound, you can get caught in the drama. And so at the beginning of this film of the guitarist Pat Metheny, you're caught immediately. Metheny sits on a stool with his hollow-body guitar before a red curtain and under phasing lights, playing with that immediately identifiable guitar tone of his. He's searching for the sound. It's riveting. And then something else happens. Metheny is surrounded by other instruments. Not by a band of players but by actual acoustic instruments that are rigged to foot pedals and other electronics that Metheny can trigger as he plays. Tambourines being struck (and caught on microphone, of course), a hi-hat cymbal hit by a drumstick. On "Unity Village" that's about it, with Metheny looping some guitar chords under his solo using foot pedals and looping software. The Orchestrion Project is much more elaborate than that, however. As Metheny stands on an oriental rug in this film, he's surrounded by percussion instruments much more varied: pianos and marimbas, vibraphones and triangles, ride cymbals and gongs, tubes, wildly rubbed saws, banjos and guitars hung on a wall, even what appear to be jugs of liquid somehow triggered into making humming sounds. He triggers this wild Rube Goldberg gizmo of an acoustic orchestra with his feet but also with the guitar itself (or so I've read, though I can't really fathom how it is happening). Truly, the film makes it seem like Metheny is a T-shirt clad mad scientist or significantly crazed inventor who was left too long in a musician's attic with a ton of technology and a boundless well of imagination. Metheny has now made a couple of audio recordings featuring this "Orchestrion" technology. Reviewing these recordings, it was hard for me to be fully enthusiastic. While the sounds are quite wondrous, really not like anything else you've heard exactly because the "hand" works with a level of synchronization that no could (or want to) achieve. These Orchestrion arrangements are highly structured, taking some sounds that are simple and some that are highly complex and layering them into a whole that seems like it is part classical symphony, part rock band (Frank Zappa is the closest analogue there), and part jazz fusion. Listening to this music without seeing how it is made, in the past, started out as delightful and then became somewhat numbing. The music was so "perfectly" executed that it started to sound, to me, like so much mechanization. The spontaneity of a real band was palpably missing. Watching the music take shape around Metheny on this mad assemblage of robotic instruments, however, goes a long way to bringing the Orchestrion idea alive. The precision of the set-up is astonishing—and how it all works is no more apparent when watching this film. Metheny comes off as a fascinating lonely figure, playing amidst these in acoustic robots but still ultimately alone with his thoughts, searching for that sound he wants. There are moments when he disappears into the sound of the other instruments and there are times when he seems to simply vanish, visually, in the room itself. (One little note I must put in here: the grand piano in the room, which is triggered by some kind of "player piano"-type technology, has a bench in front of it. You can see the keys moving as it plays, almost as if there truly was an invisible player there, his can in softly depressing the bench as his fingers on the chords and arpeggios on the instrument. Spooky.) The filmmaking here is notable. The cameras move around wonderfully, following the guitarist, of course, but also scanning the instruments as they do their weird, independent thing, with candles and clocks let on shelves—many old-fashioned and wooden, others looking vaguely like scaffolding—all around the steampunk-ish set. Lights of various kinds move about along with the cameras, turning a potentially static set into something that seems very much alive. There is no audience for this performance, which increases you sense that this whole enterprise is a kind of magic—a little shadow box of musical imagination. The second disc of this DVD set contains a "Making of" documentary and a filmed interview with Metheny. In the interview, Metheny describes how the Orchestrion project was inspired by his granddad's player piano. "Orchestrions", Metheny explains, is the name for a collection of instruments that used to be set up as a mechanical orchestra. The old orchestrons were based on pneumatic triggering, and Metheny explains that his rigs are triggering by solenoids that are spoken to through a MIDI interface—and this allows the guitarist to control the dynamics of the mechanical instruments. Metheny admits in the interview that no one really "gets" this project until they hear it, and see it. "It's kind of funny, I know," he says, "but it always makes people smile." True. Seeing The Orchestrion Project as a visual experience definitely gives you a better sense of what Pat Metheny was day-dreaming about when he cooked up this bizarre, rather wondrous idea. Is it a kind of dead-end for him, artistically? Who knows. But beyond the novelty of it, it creates a sound you aren't going to hear anywhere else. Here's to novelty and smiles!

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