



JAZZIMPROV, NY
 - dec, 2007
 &
JAZZIMPROV, USA/CA
 - dec, jan, feb, 2007
 (90 000 buyers)

CARNIVAL SKIN, NEMU Records, 2006
www.nemu-records.com

Review by Margot Elizabeth Meyers

“...the members of Carnival Skin have created more than an impression of contemporary modernism but an indelible imprint that marks our conscious and subliminal minds.”

One can only discover where the journey will lead us if we dare to follow with exploring curiosity into other worlds. With relentless self expression, courage and hard forged craftsmanship, the members of Carnival Skin have created more than an impression of contemporary modernism but an indelible imprint that marks our conscious and subliminal minds. Rife with content and images that go beyond the multi-dimensional experience, it is laden with aural interpretations that engage the listener in its total expression of absolute terms.

Carnival Skin is a newly formed quintet of composers, innovators, and improvisers – musicians whose collective experiences span several genres of music, five generations, and two continents and embodies the history and represents a new direction in the creative and free music art forms – one that abundantly employs the elements of surprise and spontaneity combined with a fearless surrendering to the unknown.

Having worked together in various combinations in the past, the five naturally come together for the first time on Carnival Skin as individual abstract aspects of a whole.

The compositions contributed by each artist, and in collaboration, are intuitively symbiotic and unified - with waves of sound hammered out in the heat of the moment - at the epicenter where all creativity is spawned. Textural sounds tempered to precision quality create solid images from the friction of their movement. Framed by a retrospective of time, the images move at many speeds conjuring shapes and forms of color as organic raw matter, layer upon layer, pounding out plates of ideas against and in juxtaposition to one another, the music builds its sound stage from the bottom up expanding and contracting

the ideas into varying energies and moods transforming thought processes in the passion of improvisation. Musicians as highly charged as Carnival Skin keep the creative pools well stocked with mind blowing inspiration and information.

It is said that life is stranger than fiction and Robinson's "Journey To Strange," the first cut on the CD, uses a swinging free bop reconstruction to convey that thought. Eisenbeil assembles a complex network of elemental lines responding to the barrage of technically flawless and complex stick work of Kugel in a like-minded exchange. Robinson's sassy swinging squawking tones and post modern concepts carry over into "Monster" where his sound mutates into an eerie and sensuously bluesy wail in an open air approach that intimates the capabilities we all possess rising to full potential and returning to the one – Hill Greene's "Iono" is the reality of those capabilities; the tragedy and exultation of truth and the comforting peace that awareness brings. I found this composition to be extraordinary in its depth of emotion. Hill's remarkable virtuosity and passion on his instrument and spiritual awareness was ever present throughout. Eisenbeil's prophetic voice comes like streak of light out of nowhere surprising us with its range of intensity and extensive vocabulary of sounds that quickly develop into torrid dialogues with Evans and Robinson building into a fiercely collective conversation. Evans has a myriad of exceptional voices that he pulls out of his trumpet-like sorcerer's wand and his performance throughout is brilliant. Greene leaves us with an indelible impression with "Iono" that is tantamount to an epiphany.

The next ear opener, "Bobosong" written by drummer Klaus Kugel, is an imaginative and rhythmic engagement of forceful magnitude. Kugel's powerfully driving drumming brings out some of the more abstract possibilities of the collaboration. The sense of each musician's inner sanctum is ever present and revelatory of their individual natures but what I found most striking given their diverse backgrounds was their similarities and the unique way they expressed those similarities such as in Eisenbeil's explosive "Diagonal People." Eisenbeil has an extremely distinctive voice and approach which lures us to bear witness to his explorations. His sound cuts across the primordial underpinnings of Greene's assiduous bowing and his ideas are boundless with an unrelenting intensity that flows over, under and through all six compositions in varying degrees. Robinson again soars on this piece pushing the acoustical limits with a sound that takes a lifetime to hone. Hill's richly brewed tone lends a sense of symmetry, balance and space to Evans' bursts of tonal colors and Eisenbeil's overlays of linear structures.

The title track "Carnival Skin", is the shortest and appropriately the last cut on the CD. It is the final chapter - the summation of the journey reflected with indigenous sonorous acuity. The group simultaneously maneuvers their way through a series of rhythmic experiences that coexist and ultimately become one in the same - movement and momentum - life and the experience of life. Carnival Skin is one of the best and most encouraging new works I've heard to date and one I highly recommend enjoying while viewing a Jackson Pollack painting and sipping a fine cognac.