



**Eisenbeil / Kugel / Robinson / Evans / Greene
CARNIVAL SKIN
Nemu**

“It’s a total bummer that The Wire magazine (and most of the others for that matter) asks their contributing writers to select the best discs of the year as early as late October, considering the volume of new releases that hits the streets in November and December. I’m wondering whether or not I wouldn’t have chosen this one as album of the year had I received it in time (as it happens that dubious honour went to Loren Connors’ Night Through) – it’s that good. Carnival Skin is a killer quintet formed by guitarist Bruce Eisenbeil and drummer Klaus Kugel, who recruited bassist Hilliard Greene, trumpeter Peter Evans and clarinetist Perry Robinson to make one of the hottest line-ups in free jazz of the past ten years. Maybe twenty. Perry Robinson needs no introduction to aficionados of free music – he’s been a driving force in free jazz for over half a century, while never quite achieving the top billing he so richly deserves. If you thought the clarinet couldn’t hold its own in a fire music outfit, think again: Robinson burns. And when he’s not burning he’s swinging, and when he’s not swinging he’s singing. In Peter Evans, whose solo trumpet debut More Is More on psi raised many eyebrows last year, he has the perfect foil. Evans was impressive enough all alone, but you should really hear him get down here. The six tracks are driven effortlessly forward by the Greene / Kugel rhythm team, with meticulous and expert punctuation from Eisenbeil, who’s never sounded so good. His solos spit fire and sweat (somewhere Sonny Sharrock is looking down approvingly) and his accompaniment counterpoints the work of the horn players to perfection. There’s an urgency to this music that’s all too often lacking in today’s so-called free jazz, much of which has settled into the kind of comfortable orthodoxy it originally set out to challenge, but also a tough, un-sentimental lyricism not always on offer in the work of other firebreathers. It’s a truly outstanding disc and if you don’t get hold of copy at the earliest available opportunity you’re a damn fool.”

~ Dan Warburton, PARIS TRANSATLANTIC, January 2007