

Cave 17.

François Ingold Trio, Fat Free



About a year ago, I wrote for a certain jazz web site and was able to review a couple of discs released by the interesting (if spotty) Swiss label Altrisuoni. I have been on their mailing list since then, receiving one package per month like clockwork. I am very happy now to actually have a venue for reviews of these discs, although I might not hit every single one, because some of them are just kind of ugh. But this one is special; it came out in December 2007 in Europe, but is listed as January 1 2008 internationally. So yay, Altrisuoni's first international release of 2008, right here for you on good ol' Cave 17.

And it's quite good. François Ingold is a *pianiste* of patience and skill and no little sense of le swing — the opening track has a sense of laid-back fun to it. . . and a title to match ("Is Mortimer Young Speaking...?"). He constructs little knotty puzzles with his piano phraseology, then effortlessly slips out of them with just a couple notes here and there. It's a funky way to start. Other tracks follow the same pattern — his trio arrangement of J.J. Johnson's "Lament" bumps right along, helped immensely by Fabian Gisler's slightly showoffy but still pretty tasty bass fills. Fred Bintner's drumming is tight and reggae-influenced, both here and on the undeniable "Alligator Dance."

A couple things help this release to stand out even more though. One is the tried-and-true Gimmicky Rock Cover Song Gambit, here done in the form of the White Stripes' "Seven Nation Army" and a pass at Iggy Pop's "Lust for Life." The GRCSG has been done to death by a bunch of modern jazz people, most infamously by Brad Mehldau, who never passes up any opportunity to show us how much he likes oh say Radiohead. But here they seem more innocent somehow, more like goofs than grand statements of Coolisme, although I might be giving too much credit to the Swiss. I'm not saying that Ingold's covers here make any sense —

neither song really has much of a melodic line.

But that actually creates another pair of Gordian knots for Ingold to untie, which he does with aplomb. “Seven Nation Army” turns into a cool modal thing that keeps bursting out and then simmering back down again, as well as providing a good opportunity for Gisler to pluck away madly on his bass. “Lust for Life” turns into an improbable gospel stomp with second-line hints in the drums, while Ingold just flings flurries of notes at us, all based around the three-note base of the song. Not great jazz, perhaps, but great fun in kind of a Swiss Futurist sort of way.

But the really intriguing stuff is found in the “classical” pieces. Three of the songs here are designated as “sonatas for spontaneous piano,” although I’m not sure if one can technically count a made-up solo piece as a sonata. (Doesn’t there have to be a counterpoint by the rest of the orchestra/band/whatever?) Anyway, they are lovely things indeed, especially Sonata No. 2, “Le Grande Peur,” which branches out at the end into some very Keith Jarrett territory, but in a good way. I am also digging “La Valse D’oscar,” which provides Gisler another opportunity to prove his chops by playing along with Ingold, and the closer, “Outoua D”una T sanhon De Bovet,” a psychedelic/ambient arrangement of an old French melody.

So yeah, this is a good one, even if some of the numbers drag on a little long — I actually love that, so no complaints here — and if there is a bit too much unresolved tension between Ingold the classicist and Ingold the rockin’ jazz guy. I don’t think we’re gonna rate things here but top marks from me.

I have no idea what their distribution is like in the U.S., but you can visit Altrisuoni’s page for the record [here](#) and Ingold’s own website [here](#).

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