

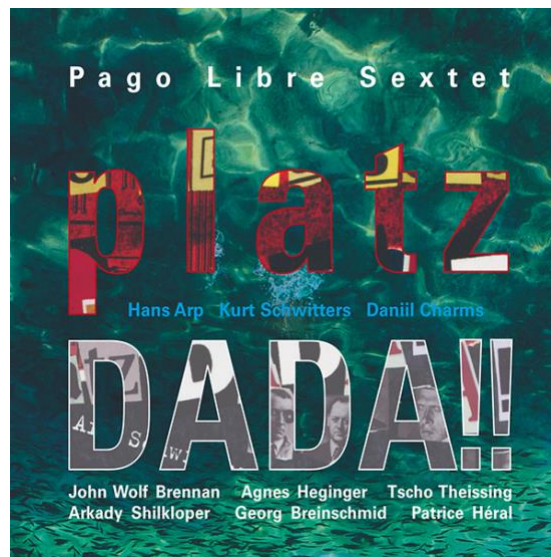


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Pago Libre's Platz Dada!!



PLATZ DADA/THEISSING: Breakfast at Vladimir Ilych. Etanosru Euronars. PAGO LIBRE: Dadábylon. BRENNAN-ARP: platzDADA!! Sinn Dong. Sankt Ziegenzack Sankt Fassanbass. Uhrmusik: Sekundenzeiger. Wolkenpumpentango. THEISSING-ARP: Die gestiefelten Sterne. HÉRAL-ARP: te gri ro ro. PAGO LIBRE-ARP: Weltwunder. THEISSING-SCHWITTERS: Schnauze, Puppe! HEGINGER-SCHWITTERS: Die Welt. BRENNAN-SCHWITTERS: ¿Nana? Drone Dance. THEISSING-SCHWITTERS: Ich bin ein Schwein. THEISSING-ARP: trains.plains. J.S. BACH-CHARMS: Das fröhliche Greislein. BREINSCHMID: A klanes Brabitschek. BRENNAN-CHARMS: Schnickschnack /

Pago Libre: Arkady Shilkloper, *Fr-hn/fl hn/alphorn/voice/ratchet*;
Tscho Theissing, *vln/voice/ratchet*; **John Wolf Brennan** *pno/*
pizzicatopiano/voice/ratchet; **Georg Breinschmid,** *bs/voice/ratchet*;
Patrice Héral, *dm/voice/ratchet*; **Agnes Heginger,** *voice/ratchet*
Leo Records LR 887

Here is yet another **Pago Libre** CD, this one completely different from *Mountain Songlines*. The quartet uses an expanded lineup with everyone pitching in on vocals to present a sort of crazy-quilt Dada experience. According to the liner notes, their inspirations include **Hans Arp** (1886-1966), **Kurt Schwitters** (1887-1948) and **Daniil Charms** (1905-1942), all nutsy European Dada artists of their time. Arp, in fact, was one of the founders of the Dada movement, and as you can see from the credits many of his texts are used. But there are even more crazy associations made here, as the liner notes indicate:

Breakfast at Vladimir Ilyich – Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, who later became known under his stage name Lenin, lived in Zurich’s Spiegelgasse in Spring 1916, just across the Cabaret Voltaire, which had just been opened by a few crazy so-called Dadaists. An important phone call reached him when he was about to prepare a tasty breakfast – playing on the radio was “Schnauze, Puppe” – surely more of a fate than ordinary coincidence...

*Dadábylon – Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (aka Arkady) begins his telephone conversation with the usual Russian formula “Dada” (yes, yes). In the true spirit of Spiegelgasse, five other voices join him, igniting a great Dadábylonian language confusion with Russian, Swiss German, English, French and Austrian German language fragments,
platz dada, platz dadadada / platz dada. platz dadadada platz dada, platz dadadada / platz DADA platz!!*

There’s more, but you get the drift. The only thing I question is the radio, since no commercial radio existed in 1916...but what the heck. Track 1 is just a peppy pop-folk tune, supposedly playing on the radio, which then leads into the jungle of Dadaistic voices in track two. By track 3 (*platzDADA!!*), we’re off to the races with Brennan’s jumpy music, jazz funk of the present day transported to this mythical 1916 site.

To say that the music of this album is difficult to put into words would be putting it mildly. I especially loved the quasi-operatic (or mock-operatic) singing of Agnes Heginger, a real “find” for the group, without whom some of the underlying humor of this CD would not exist. But this is a wild romp from start to finish. Bits of German and French popular and cabaret music come and go within the crazy-quilt of Dadaistic speech patterns, which dominate the disc. No wonder Lenin started the Bolshevik Revolution; this stuff must have driven him crazy!

So rather than try to do a track-by-track analysis, I just fastened my seat belt and enjoyed the ride. Although Pago Libre is essentially an avant-garde jazz group, and although there are several jazz elements in this disc, you can't really call it a jazz album in the strict sense of the term. A Dada album it most certainly is, but the musical influences and styles are literally all over the map. Imagine my surprise, for instance, to hear Heginger indulge in a slow, melodic waltz ballad, *te gri ro ro*, in the midst of all this craziness. One thing that surprised me was that this album was recorded in May 2006 and October 2007. What took it so long to be released? I mean, Dada is Dada, timeless yet contemporary at the same time. And surely the cuckoo sounds of Heginger in *Uhrmusik: Sekundenzeiger* is just as funny now as it was then.

But is such craziness art, or just a bunch of highly talented musicians kidding around and having fun? I'll let you decide, but remember, if you can call some of Satie's repetitive piano pieces art, what's the difference? And remember that Satie himself was a cog in the French Dada movement himself. The difference is that Satie spoofed classical form while Brennan and Pago Libre are all over the map. Let's call it jazz meets cabaret music meets Spike Jones and Frank Zappa (listen to *Schnauze, Puppe!* which starts out like a rock piece but quickly shifts to a Spike Jones-like takeoff on period pop music—all that's missing are Spike's bulb horns and gunshots).

And God knows we needed something this completely crazy to offset the different, more oppressive craziness of the Coronavirus (plus some other cute little virus currently spreading around China that they probably won't or can't contain, either). The craziest of all is the "medley" they call *Etanosru Eutonars*, "Paraphrase Associations on Themes by Kurt Schwitters." This little (14-minute) potpourri mixes a lot of influences, including a lick that sounds like *One Note Samba*, none of it in its pure form. I really wonder what the band was taking when they recorded this track, although Tscho Theissing's violin solo shows that he, at least, was in perfect command of his faculties.

"What's a rocket-ah BC?" is first spoken by Heginger, then by members of the band, before it becomes a rhythmic mantra set to a bass solo by Georg Breinschmid with French horn player Shilkloper joining him in the second chorus. Then, suddenly, the piece takes off jazz style, again channeling *One Note Samba* except for the extraneous screams and scat singing of Heginger. Shilkloper then swings mightily on the alphorn as things rise to a wild climax. PLATZ DADA!!

With *Die Welt*, we again hear a surprisingly conventional slow song that would not be out of place in a cabaret, at least not until the bridge which is jazzier and leads to bitonal music with the bass playing *arco* beneath the singer. Then the music begins to deconstruct into little phrases, some of which connect and some of which don't, before moving into a slow waltz tune with a strange melody, which then morphs into a funky atonal tune with Heginger scatting. In the next song, Heginger does a narration about "Elvis wheels" and how "mice catch fish from behind." You just can't tell or predict what will come next on this disc!

Rather than just rate this CD. I'd like to thank Leo Feigin of Leo Records for releasing it at this time. Not only I, but the world, needs this kind of inspired musical craziness now, and more of it!

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