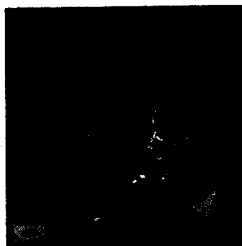




*The Complete Works  
of Eric Dolphy*  
Potsa Lotsa (Jazzwerkstatt)



*Remembering Dolphy*  
Joel Futterman  
(JDF Music)

by John Sharpe

On the face of it, reedman Eric Dolphy is an unlikely subject for a tribute album. When one thinks of Dolphy it is as a virtuoso sideman: a burning foil to the very cream - Mingus, Coltrane and Ornette. But before his untimely death in Berlin at the age of 36 some 47 years ago this month, Dolphy had released a string of recordings under his own name showcasing his own writing, of which the 1964 Blue Note *Out To Lunch* is the most celebrated, though not the bottom line. He has been honored before. Reedman Oliver Lake has been one of his biggest champions and recorded two separate tributes to the influential saxophonist. Among others is a notable duet between saxophonist Anthony Braxton and pianist Muhal Richard Abrams on *Duets* 1976 (Arista). Now come two further idiosyncratic appreciations of the reedman's oeuvre, with not a rhythm section in sight.

Like her countryman Alexander von Schlippenbach with Thelonious Monk, German saxophonist Silke Eberhard takes on the complete works of Eric Dolphy, giving us 27 short cuts, with only five breasting the five-minute mark. But Eberhard rearranges rather than reconstructs, so that the tunes remain easily recognizable with the theme carried by one or more instruments while the rest provide rhythmic counterpoint. Over two discs, her quartet Potsa Lotsa comes on like a cross between the World Saxophone Quartet and an oompah band, but in a fun way, avoiding gratuitous whimsy. Improvisation and solo outbursts form integral parts of her inventive arrangements, which delve both forward and back from Dolphy's period for inspiration. Eberhard's vision and arranging skills are the real star here, though her fluent, husky alto saxophone also captures the attention. She has chosen her colleagues well. Both Nikolaus Neuser (trumpet) and Gerhard Gschlössl (trombone) revel in the expressive possibilities of the wah-wah mute, recalling Duke Ellington's bands with trumpeter Bubber Miley at times while tenor saxophonist Patrick Braun is prone to post-Trane tonal distortion and overblown shrieks in his discourse. There is something to savor on every track with each piece rammed full of detail. So the familiar bitter sweetness of "The Prophet" unfurls into a stately horn chorus before breaking open for a breathy tenor solo, which continues skating over a Latin-tinged meter until the final recapitulation with dissonant harmonies.

No prior knowledge is needed to enjoy this set. Eberhard achieves what must be the goal of any tribute: to make the listener glad for a new perspective, but still want to explore the original albums.

Virginia-based pianist Joel Futterman has been more selective, with a 73-minute program featuring just six Dolphy pieces, along with one closely associated with the reedman and two originals. Futterman remains probably best known for his affiliation with saxophonist Kidd Jordan, usually in a freely improvised setting, where his intensity of focus, independence of movement between hands, speed and articulation are allowed full rein. On *Remembering Dolphy*, Futterman requisitions the saxophonist's compositions as launching points, frequently maintaining a rhythmic undertow derived from the tunes, though eventually forgetting Dolphy completely and looping out on wildly energetic orbits before returning to earth. At times it sounds as if the pianist has at least three hands. Hints of ragtime and barrelhouse emerge when Futterman is in full spate and sometimes an element of Monk also peeks in, such as the tinkling glissandos on the halting swing of "Serene". Futterman approaches "Miss Ann" at a furious clip while he reserves his most freeform reading for "17 West", where his thunderous harking on the bass register even brings pianist Matthew Shipp to mind. Futterman's brief two-part original "Out To Dinner" offers sparse tangential respite before finally resolving into a paraphrase of Dolphy's "Out To Lunch" in the second version. In truth, more such snack-sized breaks would have leavened some very filling fare.

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