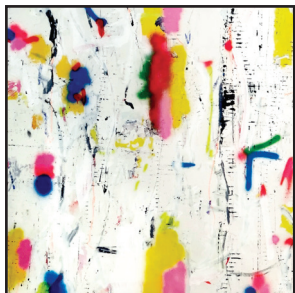


and Perdomo (on Fender Rhodes) are prominent, with an open horn solo by Finlayson. The multi-tracked voices heard on "In Those Years" features a haunting lead vocal by Theo Bleckmann, while the title track features the instrumental approach of Portuguese vocalist Sara Serpa (who is effectively featured elsewhere on the album, including on Naomi Shihab Nye's "My Grandmother in The Stars" and Piercy's "I Am Wrestling With Despair").

The thematic weave of the chosen readings becomes clear and begins to cohesively focus as the album progresses. Shepik's funky guitar underpins the music, and his lyrical repetition is used effectively. One of the most successful choices on the release is Kokayi's rap-singing recitation of his own introduction to "Sorrow Song", as well as Lucille Clifton's piece, which evokes somewhat of an irritable Gil Scott-Heron meeting '60s spiritual jazz, which actually works out quite wonderfully. Although Baum is not heard much as a soloist on the pieces that include poetry, she is showcased on the last two tracks (both instrumentals): "Dreams (for Ron Wynne)" and "In the Day of Light", the latter an album highlight.

What Times Are These is a challenging departure for Baum, and kudos to her for taking it on.

For more info visit sunnysiderecords.com. The album release concert is at Drom May 7. See Calendar.



Spectral Fiction

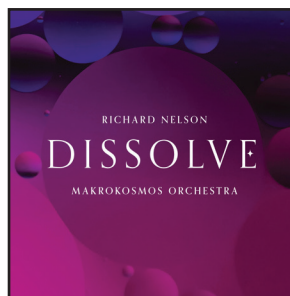
**Rob Mazurek Exploding Star Orchestra/
Small Unit (Corbett vs. Dempsey)**
by Phil Freeman

Rob Mazurek is a composer, bandleader and player of multiple instruments in the trumpet family, but the best term to describe him might be "catalyst." He has spent decades leading, or at least organizing, multiple projects including the Chicago Underground, São Paulo Underground, Exploding Star Orchestra and many others, plus collaborating with legendary figures such as trumpeter Bill Dixon and saxophonist Pharoah Sanders. When Mazurek brings people together, things happen. *Spectral Fiction* documents a performance recorded live at Corbett vs. Dempsey's Chicago gallery space in March 2023, by a stripped-down version of the ordinarily sprawling Exploding Star Orchestra. The musicians were already primed and warmed up for the date by a concert the preceding night, playing music from *Lightning Dreamers* (International Anthem) at Chicago's Adler Planetarium's Sky Theater. Mazurek is joined on *Spectral Fiction* by Damon Locks (vocals, electronics—he samples a young woman's voice, letting a phrase loop over and over, slowing down and speeding up, in a manner that recalls Steve Reich's "Come Out"), Tomeka Reid (cello, electronics), Angelica Sánchez (Wurlitzer electric piano), Ingebrigt Håker Flaten (bass) and the anchor of all the Chicago Underground groups, Chad Taylor (drums). Together they play just two pieces: "Equations of Love in Prismatic Waves of Color" (which lasts nearly 40 minutes) and the Mazurek-penned "Driftless" (13 minutes).

"Equations of Love..." is a fascinating performance. Mazurek never seems to be leading the ensemble; instead, the music swells to life out

of a drone, Taylor setting up a ticking rhythm that allows the others to essay gently exploratory melodies. At times the music brings to mind Herbie Hancock's *Mwandishi* or the late Jaimie Branch's *Fly or Die*, but the leader's solo is a sputtering whirlwind of squeals and squiggles that follows a line laid down in the manner of Lester Bowie, Bill Dixon and Wadada Leo Smith. Reid and Håker Flaten duet, before the cellist takes off on her own; Locks hectors the audience with declamatory poetry. "Driftless", with less time to work its magic, delivers more overt melody and a steadier groove.

For more info visit corbettvsdempsey.com. Mazurek is at Public Records (part of *Bang On A Can's Long Play Festival*) with *Chicago Underground Duo* May 5. See Calendar.



Dissolve

**Richard Nelson/Makrokosmos Orchestra
(Adhyâropa)**
by Scott Yanow

Guitarist Richard Nelson is a rather adventurous arranger/composer who leads the 14-piece Makrokosmos Orchestra. He has been a longtime member of the Aardvark Jazz Orchestra and has written for other groups in addition to fulfilling commissions. His writing often utilizes overflowing and crowded ensembles, a strong forward momentum, and a variety of sounds and tone colors. One may think of Bob Brookmeyer at times, but Nelson's arranging is quite original. *Dissolve* consists of three lengthy compositions (clocking in between 11:38 and 15:16) that utilize all of the colors possible with the Makrokosmos Orchestra's instrumentation of two trumpets, euphonium, bass trombone, French horn, alto, tenor, flute, bass clarinet, keyboards, bass, drums, percussion and the leader's guitar.

Album opener "Dissolve" has quite a bit going on at one time. It starts with dense ensembles, has a quieter and almost peaceful section that is occasionally punctuated by accents from the full group, and a tenor solo from Adam Kolker over the band before finishing with some otherworldly sounds. "Float" is a bit more conventional in comparison. It finds Tim O'Dell on soprano improvising over the long tones and "clouds of sound" (think Claude Thornhill) supplied by the other horns. Nelson has a solo, with the ensemble sounding closer to a jazz big band, before O'Dell and those clouds return for the last part. The final piece, "Cohere", was written to celebrate the joy of making music together with one's friends. After some rumbling ensembles, Arcoiris Sandoval is featured on electric piano. There is also a conversation between drummer Scott Neumann and Rex Benincasa on bongos, and a statement from trumpeter Jacob Varmus, with musical commentary from the other musicians. The piece and album conclude with Sandoval taking it out on keyboards.

Dissolve is filled with stimulating, unpredictable music.

For more info visit adhyaroparecords.com. The album release concert is at *Shapeshifter Lab* May 3. See Calendar.



dizzy's club

MAY 1

HELEN SUNG AND GEOFFREY KEEZER PLAY ELLINGTON

MAY 2-3

BERTHA HOPE & JORDAN WILLIAMS PLAY ELLINGTON

MAY 4-5

MARC GARY & JAMES HURT PLAY ELLINGTON

MAY 6

PATRICK BARTLEY TRIO

MAY 7

JULIAN LEE AND FRIENDS

MAY 8

APA: ISAIAH J. THOMPSON QUARTET

MAY 9-12

JULLIARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA: DUKE'S LONG FORM PIECES

MAY 13

AKIKO/HAMILTON/KOVALCHECK TRIO

MAY 14

SARAH HANAHAN: AMONG GIANTS

MAY 15

ALLAN HARRIS' HARLEM AFTER DARK

MAY 16

JEONG LIM YANG'S ZODIAC TRIO 7PM
LAWRENCE FIELDS TRIO 9PM

MAY 17-19

VICTOR GOINES QUARTET

MAY 20

CHRISTIAN X. M. MCGHEE ORCHESTRA

MAY 21

SASHA DOBSON & HER QUARTET FEAT. PETER BERNSTEIN

MAY 22-23

SUN RA AT 110 WITH SULLIVAN FORTNER'S
GALACTIC FRIENDS

MAY 24-26

CYRUS CHESTNUT TRIO

MAY 28

BRAZILIAN JAZZ ICON: A CLAUDIO RODITI TRIBUTE

MAY 29

NANNY ASSIS WITH SPECIAL GUEST RON CARTER

MAY 30-JUN 2

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