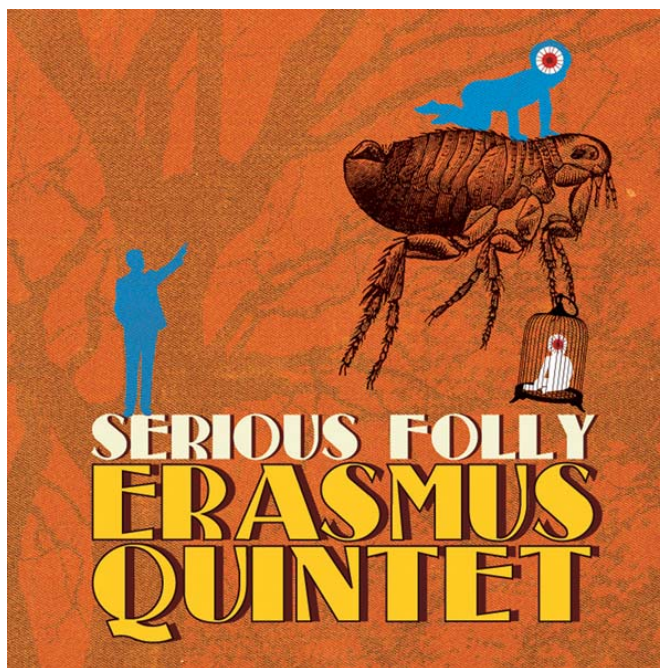


CD Review

By Brian LaRue

Wednesday, April 13th, 2011

Erasmus Quintet, *Serious Folly* (NHIC Records, nhic-records.com). Erasmus Quintet springs from the ambitious and prolific New Haven Improvisers Collective. Throughout its 51-minute runtime, this CD offers intentional melody, devil-may-care dissonance, solemnity, musical slapstick, breaths of familiarity and gusts of prismatically obtuse and whacked-out atonality. The ensemble's aesthetic is rooted in improvisational jazz, but they don't really swing or groove — they skip, they oompah, they break into free skronkitude. With no drummer present, guitarists Jeff Cedrone and Bob Gorry help frame the songs, and the push and pull between their instruments underscores the band's journeys from structure to chaos.



There's an otherworldly element from Stephen Zieminski's burbling electronic mallet percussion and from the dreamlike sounds Adam Matlock squeezes from his accordion, while saxophonist Paul McGuire teases the band farther and farther out. The group covers a lot of terrain in a single song, as in "Infinite Jest," which starts with a rhythm that brings to mind the beginning of a summer rainstorm, then lands in a placid and legato place, where nervous undercurrents from a guitar and clarinet eventually build up into cacophony and then back to quiet, creeping melodies. Like Mayhem Circus Electric, Erasmus Quintet will likely confound the uninitiated, but those open to such experimentation will find a group of interesting musicians with a fine sense of pacing their improvisations, plus plenty of playful musical gags.

— *Brian LaRue*

Erasmus Quintet plays VergeFest at Lyric Hall April 15 with Triolocus, Open Spaces and the NHIC Large Band.