

Bisquera Brothers

(Bisquera Brothers)



At no time on this family affair does **CURT BISQUERA's** drumming get in the way—rather, it *is* the way. This is groovesmanship of the highest order, caressing the time. The room positively opens up on "Lester's Intro," when the first-call LA drummer goes to the hesitating beat on ride cymbal, then breaks it down with the flam rimshots. ("Flamshots"?) "Leon's Mess" provides Bisquera with the canvas he needs to lay down one of the year's best inverted funk beats. "Let The James Begin" shows off CB's concepts of sounds and dynamics, as he pops it with snares off, again with a killer cross-stick. Through it all, **RICH MANGICARO's** percussion sweetens the mix. Forgive them for the sappy "Close To You." Folks, this is syncopation class. (www.bisquerabrothers.com)

Robin Tolleson

Victor DeLorenzo

Dictionary By/Of Marcel Duchamp



You'd be forgiven for assuming an album inspired by a famous avant-garde visual artist would be a difficult, abstract affair. And though this set by Violent Femmes drummer **VICTOR DELORENZO** is certainly adventurous, it's anything but academic. Color and rhythm are the constants throughout these mostly instrumental cuts, and DeLorenzo creates a unique sonic environment every time, with warm drum tones, eerie keyboard sounds, and intriguing vocal snippets. Drummers who've played with the idea of committing their own personal vision to tape are advised to check this one out; your options are likely greater than you think. (www.victordelorenzo.com)

Joshua Parker

Jack Bruce

More Jack Than God



Bruce has played with many drumming legends, and on *More Jack Than God* he makes an interesting choice with trapsters **ROBBY AMEEN** and **HORACIO "EL NEGRO" HERNANDEZ**, along with conga player **RICHIE FLORES**. At times the section, who Bruce earlier worked with in Kip Hanrahan's band, sound huge. "Bizniz" shows off their distinct parts on a slow 3/4. "Ricin" starts out beautifully de-constructed, and "The Night That Used To Be Mine" is a slow 6/8 that flows nicely under Bruce's melodramatic vocal. No complaint with the playing from the percussion team, though the music does seem strained to accommodate this much hitting.

Robin Tolleson

Trans Am

Liberation



Amid the futuristic new wave of Washington, DC's Trans Am, drummer **SEBASTIAN THOMSON** drives squirming funk and punk rock beats, programmed robo-grooves, and streamlined Tony Thompson imitations. Sebastian's precise, powerful drumming is as much a part of Trans Am's production style as it is the music's rhythmic impetus, each song featuring different tuning, groove attitude, and sonic approach. In "Music For Dogs" Thomson morphs from Bonham-ish bombast to static-y groove cut-ups, while his solo in "Divine Invasion" recalls the intensity of "Radar Love" and "Won't Get Fooled Again."

Ken Micallef

HANDS ON

Yahoo! Frame Drummer Group, Heritage O.P.,
The Ethos Percussion Group, Celia Malheiros

Members of the Yahoo! Frame Drummer Group submitted thirty-five tracks for *Frames Without Borders*, and a remarkable bit of hand drumming this is. **LAYNE REDMOND**, **N. SCOTT ROBINSON**, **GANESH ANANDAN**, and **JUDY PIAZZA** are among the twenty-six performers, representing a dozen different countries. A frame



drum is one whose head diameter is much greater than the depth of its frame. That definition comprises many different instruments, and indeed quite a number of those are represented here—tar, bodhran, kanjira, bendir, pandeiro, riq, daf, and of course the tambourine. (www.drydmweb.com/ydg)

New York City's Heritage O.P. builds solid rhythmic undercurrents with congas and assorted hand percussion, and then adds tuned parts on bells, mbira, marimba, and vocals as either a melody or a "cheerleader" part to get people in the groove. Bandmembers **RON MCBEE**, **KEVIN NATHANIEL**, **HASAN BAKR**, and **VICTOR Y. SEE YUEN** have a serious pop sense too. This is a joyous conglomeration of percussion power, not as a result of the soloing of any one player, but from the strength of the whole band. (www.heritageop.com)

Four more talented percussionists—**MICHAEL SGOUROS**, **ERIC PHINNEY**, **TREY FILES**, and **YOUSIF SHERONICK**—make up The Ethos Percussion Group. *Sol Tunnels* brings influences from Northern Africa, Southern India, Brazil, and a used car lot in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. This is enjoyable, non-stuffy, ethnic chamber percussion. (www.ethospercussiongroup.org)

Celia Malheiros' *Sempre Crescendo* is sensual Brazilian music that moves the percussion from a supportive role right up to the front as the heartbeat. The San Francisco-based Malheiros displays her considerable composing and instrumental talents alongside some of Rio's best musicians, including drummer **WILSON DAS NEVES**, percussionists **CELSINHO SILVA** and **MARCOS SUZANO**, and the revered keyboardist **Hermeto Pascoal**. (www.celiamalheiros.com)

Robin Tolleson

Dream Theater

Train Of Thought

Transatlantic

Live In Europe



During the past year, **MIKE PORTNOY** has appeared on albums from Neal Morse, John Arch, Jim Matheos' OSI, Dream Theater, and Transatlantic. On them he's continued to enhance his reputation, with a style that becomes progressively distinctive. Dream Theater's new album is a darker, heavier affair for them that contains some wonderful melodies and ultimately ranks among their best. With songs averaging eleven minutes, there is plenty to navigate through, and Portnoy does so powerfully.

More importantly, he avoids over-playing and is consistently musical while utilizing his formidable chops—not an easy balance considering the group's "more is more" aesthetic. Meanwhile, Transatlantic's '70s progressive vibe allows Portnoy to explore a different set of feels and phrasing from DT. Everyone seems to enjoy the engaging material, resulting in another excellent recording.

Martin Patmos