

GRÜNEN

ACHIM KAUFMANN – PIANO
ROBERT LANDFERMANN – BASS
CHRISTIAN LILLINGER – DRUMS

grünen
Clean Feed CF 202

grünen : Pith and Twig Clean Feed CF 311
released in November 2014

Grünen (“the greening”) was formed in April 2009 when Landfermann invited Kaufmann and Lillinger to participate in his ongoing concert series of improvised music at the Loft in Cologne.

Their first – completely improvised – encounter was recorded and subsequently released by Clean Feed Records.

For their second disc, the trio mixes spontaneous improv with some predetermined structures – taking new turns with written material, some of it rhythmically quite intricate and/or evoking images of surrealistic jazz and song: a strategy the three have adopted for their highly unpredictable concert performances as well.

On the occasion of Achim Kaufmann's receiving the Albert Mangelsdorff award, *grünen* performed at the Berlin Jazz Fest in November 2015 where they were joined by poet gdr guenther.

Clean Feed press text for *Pith and Twig*:

“No, the piano jazz trio format is far from being at an end, and here is one more example of that, one of the best to boot. German players Achim Kaufmann, Robert Landfermann and Christian Lillinger show us that the traditional combination of a grand piano, a double bass and a drumset can adopt experimental configurations and explore new situations. When the pianist isn't the leader of the band – in Grünen, no one is – it could even be problematic to call it a piano trio. The usual hierarchy of the instruments dissolves, and the functions of the three musicians change radically. There's no soloist and there's no rhythm section which means everybody solos and everybody supports the others. And when you have three virtuosos with an eccentric, or even punkish, anti-virtuosic approach to the music, anything can happen: lots of tension and lyricism, powerful playing and deconstructions en miniature, crazy flights and rigorous organization of sounds. Prepare yourself (again: “Pith and Twig” is Grünen's second opus) to be surprised.”

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Reviews:

“They create something new with a ‘traditional’ piano trio, with a high level of musicality and creativity. These three artists do not play music, they are music.”

Stef Gijssels – Free Jazz Blog (review of grünen)

“...a mélange of proto-classical, subversive swing and folksy impudence. (...) Here Lillinger can punctuate, cajole, react, ignore and bring to the fore all of his breadth as a player, it’s heartening to see that European avant garde keeps attracting new adherents.”

Andrey Henkin, All About Jazz New York (review of grünen)

„The music leads you in many directions, of nervous agitation, playful boppish treats, calm precision and avant-garde explorations, into the nature of sonic interaction, and most often all in the same track. Again, three outstanding musicians who bring us some of the best piano/bass/drums music around.”

Stef Gijssels, Free Jazz Blog (review of Pith and Twig)

“*Pith & Twig* is the second disc by cooperative piano trio Grünen. Alongside Lillinger the outfit comprises compatriots pianist Achim Kaufmann and frequent collaborator bassist Robert Landfermann, who operate firmly in the tradition of fully participative egalitarian piano combos. The program mixes compositions by Kaufmann with group improvisations, though the separation between them can be slight; the same nervy feel permeates both. In large part that’s down to Lillinger’s fractured sense of time and pulses of sound, in which he is abetted by Landfermann’s offkilter counterpoint. Even the written elements of Kaufmann’s charts are not straightforward. *Toquesenh* and *Mazeem* both present a melodic line underpinned by edgy start-stop rhythm, almost immediately subsumed into gloriously skewed group interplay. *Mobililar I - Mooswerdung* provides the best example, as an intro of swinging Morse code gradually deconstructs into first atmospheric then percussive improv. Kaufmann’s accumulating patterns assert architecture not always otherwise evident amid the clanking piano preparations, rubbed strings and gamelan sonorities. Lillinger proceeds in irrepressible bursts of rhythm, tight rolls, tappy eruptions and precise bish bash bong. He slips easily into partnership with Landfermann, who wields his bow with abrasive physicality. Their oddly accented phrases and stabbed interjections conspire to keep listeners on the edge of their seats.”

John Sharpe, NYC Jazz Record

Achim Kaufmann lived in Amsterdam from 1996 to 2009 and now resides in Berlin.

Since the late 90s, he has been collaborating with reedist Michael Moore in various groups (trio kamosc, gueuledeloup quartet, duo Kaufmann/Moore). Another long-standing group is his improvising trio with Frank Gratkowski and Wilbert de Joode which has recently been extended by Richard Barrett, Okkyung Lee, and Tony Buck to form the sextet *SKEIN*. Besides, he has performed and/or recorded with Jim Black (Trio kyrill), Axel Dörner, Mark Dresser, Shelley Hirsch, Fay Victor, Han Bennink, Paul Lovens, George Lewis, Roger Turner, and many more. He writes music, primarily for his own groups, but also for chamber ensembles such as the Vancouver-based Standing Wave ensemble.

In 2015, he received the prestigious Albert Mangelsdorff award in Germany.

Robert Landfermann (*1982) who studied double bass with Dieter Manderscheid at the Cologne Conservatory is arguably one of the most in-demand bass players in Europe. He is a member of the highly successful Pablo Held Trio and played with Joachim Kühn, Django Bates, Tomáš Stanko, Urs Leimgruber, John Taylor, Charlie Mariano, Rudi Mahall, Markus Stockhausen, Axel Dörner, Tobias Delius, Médéric Collignon, Jim Black, John Scofield and many more.

He is also involved in a number of double bass projects, ranging from solo bass (his solo cd *Null* got released in 2010) to bass quartet and bass orchestra.

Christian Lillinger (*1984) began playing the drums at age 13 and subsequently studied with Günter “Baby” Sommer at the Dresden conservatory. He has been touring with the trio *Hyperactive Kid* since 2002. In 2008, he formed his own group, *Grund* which has released two albums on Clean Feed Records so far. Further collaborators include Urs Leimgruber, Rudi Mahall, Peter Evans, Joe Lovano, Richie Beirach, William Parker, Wadada Leo Smith, Barre Phillips, Günter Sommer, Ernst Ludwig Petrowsky, Rolf Kühn, Dave Liebman, Alexander von Schlippenbach, Simon Nabatov, Joachim Kühn, Tobias Delius, Miroslav Vitous...