

Rocco John Group

DEVOTION - COCA (Coalition Of Creative Artists), 2009; www.RoccoJohnMusic.com. *Riffin' For Eric; Bass Talk; Bach to Bird; Cy-Cology; Devotion Suite I; Devotion Suite I and II; Devotion Suite IV; Mischvious Mystic; Freedom Theme I and II; Freedom Theme III; Dreams.*

PERSONNEL: Rocco John Iacovone, alto/soprano saxophones; Michael Irwin, trumpet; Aaron Keane, bass; Dalius Naujokaitis, drums/percussion.

By: Nora McCarthy

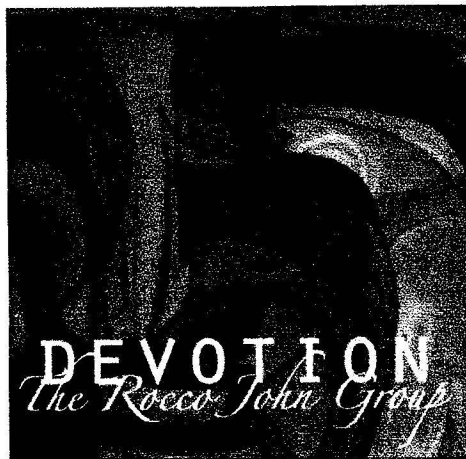
Rocco John Iacovone may not be a name that is familiar to many in the "jazz world," but he is well known and well regarded in the creative free form music community in New York City especially the scene that thrives on the Lower East Side.

It was my pleasure to meet, hear and subsequently perform/record with this versatile and unique artist first in the Dissident Arts Orchestra and later in The Red Microphone group led by vibraphonist, John Pietaro, a little over a year ago. The biggest bonus in all of the networking that goes on in this small niche community is to learn about artists that have been "doing it" under the radar for decades—making great music, without the acclaim and the ego that is normally attached to the pursuit. Artists such as Iacovone, are the ones who continue to selflessly push the parameters of the music they so love, through their dedication, consistently playing, supporting other artists and venues that present creative music and by teaching. They possess a treasure trove of information and are the essence of what commitment to this music is all about. There is much to be learned from their humble example. They neither judge nor can be judged because subscribing to the freedom they incorporate in their playing demands that they possess an openness and purity of heart in order to create from a place of truth.

Total musicianship is something that goes without saying with regard to Iacovone who composed all the music on *Devotion* and who studied with the master alto saxophonist Lee Konitz. They remain close friends to this day. And, Iacovone also teaches.

Andrew Marcinkowski gets high scores for his excellent engineering—recording, mixing and mastering of this project. The CD has a well preserved vintage sound that is reminiscent of the free jazz that was released in its early and mid-60s heyday, by established labels such as Prestige, Blue Note and Impulse. It was a pleasure to listen to the music without intrusive and altering techniques that in far too many recent releases overshadows the art and the performance if not totally misrepresenting it.

The array of off-the-palette, color tones of Iacovone's saxophones and Irwin's trumpet,



whether used in unison, playing the appealing intricate heads to the compositions, or in a group improvisational format, fit snugly into the inner listening channel—full of pleasing resonance, dissonant at times with just enough edge to their quality to give them a distinct third sound together. Their interaction is complimentary and it's clear how they "get" each other by respecting each other's space—not playing over one another but seeing the larger picture and their place within it.

The compositions range from the be-bop ode to Eric Dolphy, "Riffin' For Eric," one of Iacovone's first influences and inspirations to the last ethereal and contemplative piece "Dreams." But, the consistently solid playing from the group is present regardless of reference on all he tracks.

Drummer/Percussionist Dalius Naujokaitis, swings hard and locks in every piece with his tasteful stick and brush work. He is the consummate foundation decorating the playing field with inventive fills that roll over the drum set taking artful solos on every track, notably on the "Devotion Suite I, II, III and IV" and demonstrating a broad range of masterful dynamics throughout. Aaron Keane gels nicely with Naujokaitis and has his say on "Bass Talk" and on "Bach to Bird" which steps off on classical footing established by Iacovone and goes out with a sweet bop motif. Keane swings with a cool confidence and outlines every piece with his well rounded rich voice and implicit playing.

The music on this CD was written from a place of love, spirituality, reverence, and wisdom. It is a quest for truth and light as well as a transformational experience, a "crossing through the veil," for Iacovone. He pays tribute to those jazz masters who have influenced him: Eric Dolphy, Lenny Tristano, Lee Konitz, Thelonius Monk, Dennis Irwin and John Coltrane whom he dedicates "Devotion Suite I, II, III, and IV." On those tracts, the overall collective interaction opens up and the music takes on additional facets evolving and magnetizing all that "is" within its sphere.

Iacovone leads his troupe with an acute understanding of the creative process and an in-

depth facility on his instruments. Beginning with his early more in-the-tradition solos to where he subtly steps further outside on "Freedom Theme", Iacovone's playing is exhilarating and is a testament to his ability to put it all in perspective and be "free."

The message that Iacovone and his ensemble deliver on *Devotion* comes from a place of enlightenment and gratitude. Denise Iacovone, Rocco John's wife, did the beautiful artwork on the cover. She calls it, "Removing Hatred."

I like listening to a CD before reading the liner notes. It helps me to determine afterward whether or not the music hit its mark. That being said, it also really doesn't matter what anyone says about something, the music speaks for itself. *Devotion* is a very well imagined, constructed and executed body of work. The three strengths that are at its core are: (1) Composition, (2) Performance, and (3) Sound. And, after having listened, yes, it hits its mark—both as an act of devotion and as an elevated and transformative musical experience.

Ivo Perelman, Joe Morris, Balázs Pándi

ONE—Rare Noise Records 034. Web: IvoPerelman.com, RareNoiseRecords.com. *Freedom; What Love Can Lead To; To Remember What Never Existed; One; Universal Truth; Stigma*
PERSONNEL: Ivo Perelman, tenor saxophone; Joe Morris, electric bass; Balázs Pándi, drums

By Alex Henderson

"Rock" is not a word that one often hears in connection with the innovative tenor saxophonist Ivo Perelman, who is originally from Brazil but has spent many years living and working in New York City. Perelman, known for his daring and visionary blend of avant-garde free jazz and Brazilian influences, has usually operated in the acoustic realm. Staying faithful to the spirit of Albert Ayler and late-period John Coltrane (that is, Coltrane in 1965 and beyond), Perelman has demonstrated that one needn't use electric instruments to achieve scorching, blistering intensity. But on *One*, the tenor firebrand does have some rock influence—and a lot of it comes from Hungarian drummer Balázs Pándi.

This session finds Perelman forming a trio with Joe Morris on electric bass and Pándi on drums. In Europe, the 30-year-old Pándi is best known for his contributions to extreme rock—some of it metal, some of it hardcore, some of it noise rock. The underground bands he has played with include, among others, Wormskull, the Blood of Heroes and Metallic Taste of Blood. And on *One*, a drummer who has played his share of extreme rock successfully tackles extreme jazz. Pándi's presence on forceful, dissonant, in-your-face offerings like "Universal," "Freedom," "To Remember What Never Existed" and "Stigma" doesn't cause Perelman to