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Imaginarium

Charlier / Sourisse | Gemini Records (2011)

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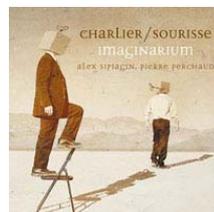
2 personnes aiment ça.

By JOHN KELMAN

Published: January 19, 2011

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To affirm that jazz is, indeed, a global concern one only need look at transatlantic collaborations taking place on a regular basis. One look at the list of albums reviewed at *All About Jazz* and it's patently clear that, while cultural cross-pollination has been going on for decades, it's now a norm rather than a phenomenon. Whether **meeting** at international jazz festivals, or simply making cold calls to artists with whom they'd like to play, more and more musicians are looking far from home for potential collaborators.



Percussionist André Charlier and keyboardist Benoît Sourisse have been trawling beyond France's borders since the inception of their Charlier/Sourisse project in 2001, recruiting American artists including saxophonists Jerry Bergonzi and Kenny Garrett, and guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel. *Imaginarium* combines friends old and new, bringing guitarist/banjoist Pierre Perchaud back from 2007's *Héritage* (O + Music), but this time in a more prominent role, alongside nouveau ami Alex Sipiagin—who, since emigrating from Russia to the US two decades ago, has become first-call trumpeter for bassist Dave Holland in his big band and octet, while releasing a string of fine albums under his own name for the Dutch Criss Cross label.

Imaginarium's eclectic set of contemporary originals covers tremendous stylistic ground, from two swinging variations on the mainstream "Flying fox"—one featuring Sourisse on Hammond B3, the other on piano—to the Yellowjackets-tinged but

Track Listing: Conte utopique à pistons; Le chat et la souris; La chanson idéale du facteur cheval; Amuse-bouche; L'afrobeat improbable (le retour de l'improbable afrobeat); L'éckaireur; Flying fox (le jour); Spirit of fables; Le danseuse; Le petit soldat de plomb unijambiste; Flying fox (la nuit).

Personnel: André Charlier: drums, percussion (2, 4, 9); Benoît Sourisse: piano (1-3, 8, 11), Hammond B3 (5-7, 10); Alex Sipiagin: cornet (1, 2, 5, 6, 10), trumpet (2, 3, 7, 8); Pierre Perchaud: guitar (1-3, 5-8,

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uncharacteristically banjo-driven and contrapuntally complex "Le Chat et la Souris" and even more thematically interlocking "La chanson idéale du facteur cheval." Contrasting the high velocity, transatlantic soul jazz of "L'afrobeat improbable," the grooving, 6-over-4 pulse of "Le petit soldat de plomb unijambiste" harkens back to Pat Metheny Group, circa *Still Life (Talking)* (Nonesuch, 1987), except that Sipiagin's incendiary yet thoughtfully focused solo transcends anything the late Mark Ledford ever demonstrated, at least within the confines of PMG.

Sipiagin, in fact, shines throughout the disc—more Woody Shaw than Miles Davis in tenor, but by now undeniably his own man—his almost unbelievably fiery solo on "L'afrobeat improbable" matched by Sourisse on Hammond, who somehow combines lightning bebop fluency with a hint of Keith Emerson bombast—both soloists supported by Perchaud's in-the-weeds but fast-strummed banjo pulse. Elsewhere, Perchaud is given greater dominance, demonstrating economical lyricism on the tender ballad "L'éckaireur," and sinewy dexterity on both "Le petit soldat" and the dark-hued but simmering opener, "Conte utopique à pistons."

Throughout, Charlier is an empathic accompanist, demonstrating a remarkable cross-cultural command of all things rhythmic and *polyrhythmic* on two solo percussion miniatures: the multilayered, "Amuse-bouche"; and even brighter "La danseuse." Throughout, as a writing and conceptual team, Charlier and Sourisse are paradoxically regnant *and* democratic, providing plenty of direction and freedom for Sipiagin, Perchaud, and, also returning from *Héritage* for two tracks, saxophonist Stéphane Guillaume. *Imaginarium* is one of those albums that, in this time of unmanageably high release volumes, could easily pass by unnoticed, but deserves to be heard, as much for its unknown quantities as the presence of the better-known and, as ever, creatively brilliant Sipiagin.

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10, 11), banjo (2, 5); Stéphane Guillaume: tenor saxophone (1), alto saxophone (5); Jean-Michel Charbonnel: bass (1-3, 8, 11); Fabrice Alleman: clarinet (8).

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