

WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT

ERGO

IF NOT INERTIA

CUNEIFORM

2012

*Lineup: Brett Sroka: trombone, computer; Sam Harris: piano, prepared piano and Fender Rhodes piano; Shawn Baltazor: drum
Guests: Mary Halvorson: electric guitar; Sebastian Kruger: acoustic guitar*

“Ergo has fine-tuned an unusual and evocative mix...using electronics and uncommon voices (a ringing Fender Rhodes keyboard, some well-placed whistling) in ways that supplement their sound without exactly complementing it. Trombonist and bandleader Brett Sroka crafts some tightly-woven compositions, but there are wild cards at play in the mix...

Ergo occupies the jazzish side of what might be called Brooklyn New Music, a more rock-leaning movement than old-fashioned New Music. It’s still instrumental music fronted by a horn, but lies on both sides of the imaginary divide. ...the band, which...can sound like a quintet at one moment and an amalgam of organic accidents the next,. Is the perfect setting for Halvorson. ...Here presence is nicely set off by Kruger’s acoustic guitar, which floats over the album’s closing track like it’s wandering through a dream. ...what makes Ergo so great is that in the end all the parts fit.”

–**Kurt Gottschalk**, *The New York City Jazz Record*, Feb. 2012

“This wildly experimental electro-acoustic ensemble...concocts some strangely compelling music. From the droning, Terry-Riley-inspired loops of “Sorrows of the Moon” to the exquisite music-box pointillism of “Two for Joy” and the free-jazz vehicle “Little Shadow,” nothing is predictable or tame on *If Not Inertia*. ...the leader whistles an ominous theme on the droning title tracks, and Halvorson unleashes a torrent...on the dense, turbulent “The Widening Gyre.” Adventurous ears will appreciate what these sonic seekers are putting down here.”

– **Bill Milkowski**, *Jazz Times*, May 2012

“For their third album, the offbeat experimental jazz-rock trio Ergo brought in a few guest performers to shake things up... If you’re going to introduce any musicians who can be disruptive and still find a place within the strange sounds of avant garde modern music, you could hardly come up with a better choice than the forward thinking guitarist Mary Halvorson...

...Ergo’s music shares the gradually unfolding qualities of ambient music, but it’s not quite ambient. They share the capricious spirit of jazz, but they’re not quite jazz, either. And they borrow the episodic structure of chamber music, although you can’t call this chamber music. Add to that the smart use of electronics a la Radiohead, but electronics that blends in organically...you don’t even notice it’s there. It’s all of the above and none of the above...

“The Widening Gyre” incorporates all those things that make Ergo special, with the added bonus of Halvorson...Her full-bodied tone plays the same seminal role John McLaughlin assumed on Miles Davis’ “Shhh/Peaceful”: lingering and easing into the gaps left behind after Maguire’s broken chords and Reed’s unsettled beats that provide the undercurrent for Stroke’s simple but dramatic trombone lines. ... In a motif where the dissonant acts as a stimulant to the melody, that odd guitar makes a perfect fit.

Credit Brett Sroka for having the conception, leadership and know-how to make mind-stimulating songs... Also credit him for having the gumption and vision to utilize one of progressive jazz’s most talked-about new talents in a way that fully justifies all the hoopla surrounding her.”

–**S. Victor Aaron**, “One Track Mind: Ergo with Mary Halvorson, “The Widening Gyre”, 2012”, *Something Else*, April 28, 2012

“Electroacoustic trio Ergo was formed...by New York based trombonist Brett Sroka, who was inspired by the seamless blend of electronics and more traditional instrumentation on Radiohead’s 200 album *Kid A*. ...

...the band’s sound hinges on the use of loops and a wide range of other electronic effects,...which mesh with the warm, organic tones of the trombone, drums and piano. Ambient, avant-garde and free jazz mingle in seven tracks that offer dissonant patterns underpinned by insistent drones, and some unexpected snippets of skewed melody that temper the austere rarified quality of the music.

...Some of the tracks offer intriguing sonic renditions of celebrated literary works in a way that...makes for an arresting listening experience. ...

If Not Inertia is an album of light and shade, made of sounds that possess a somewhat brittle quality, like glass that is about to break. ...instruments often seem to be playing different lines, which...coalesce to create a texture reminiscent of an abstract painting, at the same time ethereal and intensely expressive. “Sorrows of the Moon” recreates the Baudelaire poem of the same name in melancholy, haunting fashion, depicting its inherent languor and ennui through the mournful voice of the trombone and a droning piano... “The Widening Gyre”, inspired by William Butler Yeats’ iconic poem “The Second Coming”...erupts into trombone-led chaos that conveys the poem’s stark, powerful imagery,...

If Not Inertia will delight lovers of ambient and experimental jazz, as well as those with a keen interest in the use of computers for music-making. This is an album for adventurous listeners...a challenging but rewarding listen.”

–**Raffella Berry**, *Fire of Unknown Origin*, June 20, 2012

“Ergo is an ensemble by Brett Sroka, whose contribution include “trombone, computer, whistling”. That odd list gives fair warning of this CD’s strange sound-world, which also embraces prepared piano, clicking percussion, and Mary Halvorson’s haunting guitar. The music’s charm lies in the way...continuity slowly emerges from tiny scraps and drones, and a distinct mood.”

–**Ivan Hewett**, *Daily Telegraph*, July 14, 2012

“2012: Five + Five Overlooked Gems: #2. Ergo / *If Not Inertia* (Cuneiform)

...A mix of ambience, electronics, and improvisation, Ergo offers a compelling vision of how jazz can thrive in the context of processed textures. The group ably blends trombone, lap top, Rhodes electric piano, guitar, and percussion into compositions that carve sculptural blocks of sound into rigorous, unpredictable, and playful ribbons. 21st Century fusion, y’all– the way ahead.”

–**Destination Out**, Jan. 30, 2012

“Piano Insides. ...Listen to Ergo, an electro-acoustic trio – somehow both slinky and spacey – with trombone, prepared piano, drums, and special guests on guitar.”
–**John Schaefer**, “New Sounds: Episode #3309: Piano Insides,” WNYC, March 5, 2012

“4.4/5 stars! Even if Ergo sounds deeply rooted in jazz, the comparison of their release “Multitude, Solitude” with sonic gems which have nothing to do with jazz such as Autechre, Sigur Ross, Steve Reich or Radiohead...don’t appear so orthogonal to me after the listening of this great album, the most recent act by this combo... It happened by chance that Ergo’s music sublimed my reading of...”Notes from Underground” by Fyodor Dostoyevsky...they mentioned that great Russian storyteller (together with Charles Baudelaire, William Butler Yeats, Joseph Campbell and Mark Gonzales - ! -) amidst their sources of inspiration. Metronome’s sob in the initial “Sorrows Of The Moon”, followed by wise piano strokes by Sam Harris, sets the mood with a sort of...anguished ballad... The sweet melody of a prepared piano sounding like a toy instrument...carry the framework of...”Two For Joy,” a sort of roving digression of melancholic brightening... The title-track acts as watershed of the album, as the second part better highlights the remarkable inputs...by two guest guitar player...Halvorson adds a certain obliqueness...in “The Widening Gyre” and duels with the sliding trombone by Sroka...while Sebastien Kruger’s acoustic guitar took part in the choral breezy melody of ...“Lets”. ...I warmly recommend a listening of this nice musical work out by Ergo.”
–**Chain D.L.K.**, May 13, 2012

“A few decades ago it wasn’t evident that computers could become an integral component to music, other than some experimental persuasions set forth by...jazz trombonist George Lewis, who helped pioneer live electronics... But trombonist Brett Sroka carries the torch, yet in a different or...more subtle light. ...on...*If Not Inertia*, the band’s gradually ascending theme-building exercises...cast an ethereal panorama...

...a sense of adventure permeates these largely slow to mid-tempo pieces. ...on “Two for Joy,” ...Sroka’s yearning notes resonate a simple melody atop drummer Shawn Baltazor’s briskly trickling cymbals... They spiral into an airy and bustling scenario, tinted with Sam Harris’ minimalist piano voicings. In other spots, they delve into avant garde territory... Halvorson’s wily guitar lines on “The Widening Gyre” provide a continuum of abstracts...

...distinction pervades...these compositions, partly engineered with budding layers, climactic opuses, subtle tonalities and a horde of compelling contrast via Sroka’s unorthodox...composition schematics. ...subsequent listens unearth newfound attributes.”
–**Glenn Astarita**, *All About Jazz*, May 25, 2012

“...this is trombonist Bret Sroka’s baby, with Shawn Baltazor (drums)..Sam Harris (piano, Rhodes), and guest guitarists Mary Halvorson and Sebastien Krueger. Sroka’s sampling creates a compelling rhythmic underflow for his rumbling horn... B+”
–**Tom Hull**, *Rhapsody Streamnotes*, Nov. 2012

“AMN Best of 2012 (So Far) ... We are half-way through 2012, a therefore is it a good time t revisit some of the best releases that have come to my attention so far this year. ... Honorable mentions: Ergo – *If Not Inertia*”
–**Mike Borella**, *Avant Music News*, June 26, 2012

“Jazz of the Year 2012: ... these are all fine recordings, spanning a broad range of thinking and styles. Discs in the ‘Honorable Mention’ can be as strong as the top ten...Honorary Mention ... Ergo, *If Not Inertia*”
–**The Big City Blog**, Dec. 13, 2012

“Halvorson’s quasi-flamenco guitar phrases carve a human space in the tense rhythmic trance a la Necks [on] *Sorrows Of The Moon*. Sam Harris’ piano and Baltazor’s ticking [percussion pen the sublime chamber music for lonely nights of *Two For Joy*. ...”
–**Piero Scaruffi**, www.scaruffi.com

“...Brett Sroka and...Ergo...consolidating a line-up...the pianist Sam Harris ad percussionist Shawn Baltazor... Assisted by guitarists Mary Halvorson and Sebastien Kruger, they give life to a disk chiaroscuro... Being an instrumental record, If not, inertia...require[s]] a threshold of attention usually very high. ...the trombone that crosses the individual songs as the wind that herald the storm, exploring the sonic texture that makes them similar in certain sequences to Sigur Ros...the trio...shelter the audience...making it instead a participant of a long walk to the uncertain glow of the moon...particularly fascinating. The truism...turns into pleasure of discovery, being accompanied by a sound that seems to come straight from the Heart of Darkness.”
–**Hadrianus**, *Ver Sacrum*, 12/26/2012