



Bio information: **ERGO**

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FILE UNDER: JAZZ / ELECTRONIC / MINIMALISM

**The Bold Minimalist Trio ERGO Delivers a Striking, Improvisation-Laced Sonic Journey
Inspired by the Cryptic Verse of Poet Emily Dickinson
in the Suite *As subtle as tomorrow*, the Electro-Acoustic Ensemble's Third Cuneiform Release**

*As subtle as tomorrow
That never came,
A warrant, a conviction,
Yet but a name.
--Emily Dickinson*

With his embrace of open space and strategic use of silence, trombonist, composer, and sonic architect **Brett Sroka** has honed an inviting improvisation-laced sound in his trio **Ergo**, an electro-acoustic group approach that often reveals astonishing, strangely beautiful and unexpected realms. What's not surprising about Ergo is discovering Sroka's affinity for **Emily Dickinson**, the poet whose radical concision and visionary deployment of silence is unmatched in the English language. Featuring drummer **Shawn Baltazor** and **Sam Harris** on piano, prepared piano and Fender Rhodes, Ergo's third Cuneiform album *As subtle as tomorrow* is based on a brief and typically cryptic **Dickinson** verse. The project captures the latest evolution of Sroka's singular vision.

A seven-piece suite in which overlapping melodies, motifs and improvisations organically evolve into and out of the music's electronic elements, *As subtle as tomorrow* takes its name from a Dickinson poem that can be reconstructed from the fragments and phrases that Sroka borrowed as tune titles. Evocative and mysterious, playful and spiritually charged as a Zen koan, the music is inspired by the stark intensity and hymn-like clarity with which Dickinson considers and transcends thoughts of time and destiny.

"She's my favorite poet," Sroka says. "There's something about her simplicity and succinctness and clarity, which is so direct and poignant, that I decided I wanted to use that verse for this suite. As I started writing I gave fragments to different pieces, and the only reason that the poem is broken up is that the music flowed better that way. The title for each one felt right."

Steeped in jazz and inspired by artists from **Stockhausen**, **Xenakis**, and **Terry Riley** to **Sigur Ros** and **Aphex Twin**, Sroka infuses Ergo's music with an improvisational ethos. While he uses various effects, every sound is drawn from or created out of the acoustic instruments sampled in real time as the trio plays together. The experience of performing the music in concert deeply informed the suite's development, and the music unfolds with its own interior logic.

The album opens with "As tomorrow," a spare, shimmering soundscape that introduces the haunting theme that reconstitutes itself in various guises throughout the suite. The results can be uneasy and dreamlike ("A warrant"), mournful and resigned ("As subtle"), or jubilant and spritely ("A conviction"). Concluding with "A name," which is almost a mini-suite in itself, *As subtle as tomorrow* doesn't resolve neatly or deliver a cozy resolution. With Sroka's trombone tranquilly searching in the midst of a sparse field of electronic textures, Baltazor's cymbal caresses and Harris's repetitive, rising and falling piano line, the music raises more questions than it answers, which seems to be exactly what Dickinson intended with the verse.

In something of a "chicken and egg" approach, Sroka composed the themes on paper in conjunction with designing a Max/MSP software instrument to sample and process them. Through a combination of techniques, including slicing/sequencing, granular synthesis, time stretching and pitch shifting, this custom Max/MSP patch creates loop-based rhythms, abstracted timbral accompaniments, and interactive responses.

Under Sroka's direction the trio is devoted to exploring the push and pull between structure and freedom, density and spaciousness, and electronic and acoustic timbres. One can see Ergo's transparent sound as a conscious reaction to the prevalence of frenetic, sonically dense music being created by some of Sroka's contemporaries.

"There's something that appeals to me about space and silence and attractive melodies," he says. "I'm interested in ambient music, which led to **Arvo Pärt** and **John Cage** and patient listening music that incorporates a lot of silence. One motivation might have been a response to jazz that's out there, music that's hyper technical, hyper busy, with a lot going on all the time."

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In many ways, Ergo is the sum of its manifestly creative parts. Raised in Lexington, Mass., Sroka studied with trombone greats **Britt Woodman** and **Steve Turre** at Manhattan School of Music, where he earned a BA in 1997 and pursued his own compositional studies by dissecting dozens of **Duke Ellington** scores. He made his recording debut as a leader with 2002's impressive Fresh Sound-New Talent CD *Hearsay*, a stellar sextet session featuring rising masters **Jason Moran**, **Eric Harland** and trumpeter **Avishai Cohen**. Shortly after the album's release, electronic music captured his imagination. Feeling hemmed in by the limited opportunities for his horn, Sroka immersed himself in synthesizers and software.

"When you're a trombonist playing jazz, you feel marginalized," Sroka explains. "You're not the most popular instrument. I think I felt inadequate and that motivated me to get into electronics, to develop another palette to draw from. It's funny, there's a bunch of other trombonists who use electronics. I saw a video of **George Lewis** and he said something to a similar effect, that the trombone wasn't enough."

Ergo came together in 2005 when Sroka was working with a cadre of similarly inclined musicians unconcerned about genre conventions, performing in venues with audiences open to musical exploration such as Mercury Lounge, 55 Bar and Galapagos. Evolving out of these musically permissive forums, Ergo released its 2006 debut album *Quality Anatomical Music* on its own **Actuator** label, an album lauded as the year's best debut CD by *All About Jazz-NY*. The original lineup featured Sroka on trombone and computer, **Carl Maguire** on Rhodes electric piano, Prophet Synthesizer and effects, and drummer **Damion Reid** (best known for his work with **Robert Glasper**, **Greg Ward** and **Rudresh Mahanthappa**).

The album's success led to performances at an international array of major festivals and Ergo's ongoing relationship with **Cuneiform**. Ergo's Cuneiform debut, 2009's *multitude, solitude*, featured a new version the band with Sroka, Maguire and drummer Shawn Baltazor, a dynamic, stylistically expansive drummer and composer who performs with heavyweights like **Jon Irabagon**, **Seamus Blake**, **Ben Street**, **Ben Monder** and **Darcy James Argue's Secret Society**.

Baltazor also works regularly in various settings with pianist Sam Harris, who joined Ergo on 2012's *If Not Inertia* (a critically hailed album that featured left-field guitar star **Mary Halvorson** on three tracks). Born and raised in Dallas, Tex., Harris has emerged in recent years as one of the most sought after young pianists in New York City, performing and recording with superlative artists such as trumpeter **Ambrose Akinmusire**, vocalist **Gretchen Parlato**, and drummer **Rudy Royston**.

"Shawn and I were in a group Atticus led by **Sebastian Kruger** before Ergo, and he's really self motivated and open to the concept of the music," Sroka says. "It's spacious and can sound simple but there's a lot of freedom within that, and you have to get into that mindset. I met Sam when Jason Moran recommended him. Initially I wanted Ergo to go in a much more electronic direction, but by the time Sam came in I was ready to incorporate acoustic piano. He's an amazing, fiery young player and I designed some compositions to push him and Shawn in the directions they might not otherwise go."

In the works for several years, Sroka started developing the new suite when he was a fellow at the I-Park Foundation in Connecticut in 2012. He completed the music in the spring of 2014 at the Vilnius Academy of Art - Nida Art Colony in Lithuania. To draw on the input and distinctive styles of the ensemble members, excerpts were also developed live, before a broad range of audiences, including experimental music fans at the Sonic Circuits Festival in Washington D.C., New York City jazz crowds at Shapeshifter Lab and the Cornelia Street Café, and composition students during a workshop at the University of Pennsylvania.

In addition to Ergo, Sroka is a prolific film composer who co-leads the melodronoise duo **Cherubim** (and was formerly a member of the psych/noise/rock collective **12,000 Trees**). When he's not making music, Sroka is a carpenter who also works for a prestigious New York art gallery.

For more information on Ergo:

www.ergoisaband.com – www.facebook.com/ergoisaband – www.cuneiformrecords.com

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

Digital [High-Resolution] versions of these images are available on the Ergo artist page @ www.cuneiformrecords.com



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 ambiance, 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

ERGO

MULTITUDE, SOLITUDE

CUNEIFORM

2009

Lineup: **Brett Sroka:** trombone, computer; **Carl Maguire:** Rhodes electric piano, Prophet synthesizer, electronic effects; **Shawn Baltazor:** drum

“In his own words trombonist Brett Sroka surrounded himself with synthesizers “to reconcile the six hundred years of technology between the trombone and the computer” and for the most part, this album connects, on a broadband scale.

...each song appears to sound like it each has its own story to tell. ... Each song and the album as a whole has direction, not stuck sounding like an “electrazzic” album...”
– **Brenton Plourde**, *Jazz Times*, April 27, 2009, www.jazztimes.com

“...the trio dubbed Ergo represents a new era in music making where chill and improvisation meet headlong in the personal computer-driven age. ...trombonist Brett Sroka and keyboardist Carl Maguire merge separate and distinct identities in creative jazz-oriented music to create urban, rural and atmospheric soundscapes that go to the far side of any discernible influences, including that of Eno, Sun Ra, Autechre, or Curtis Fuller. There’s a tuneful quality, consistent drones and spikes that suggest industrialism, retro fusion via Maguire’s Fender Rhodes electric piano, and even an underground bop aesthetic fueled by post-rock and tempered with the

romanticism of Sigur Rós. ... you'll hear them go well beyond any strictly defined tones, into completely new horizons similar to nothing you've heard before. ... Ergo has touched on something quite unique and cool in contemporary fusion music with *Multitude*, *Solitude*, reaching into and past modern creative, ambient music or mere basic electronica. Teamwork...captivating, hypnotic, and attractively exotic music..."

- **Michael G. Nastos**, *All Music Guide*, www.allmusic.com

"Pointillist gurgles and clouds of computer haze are made beautiful by boss Brett Sroka's design sense—this trombone, Rhodes, and drums trio has a deft touch when it comes to molding silence and drones into rich celestial balladry. The subtleties of the new *multitude*, *solitude* are a nifty confluence of George Lewis's dreamscapes and Miles's *Lonely Fire*, and while it's a record that invites you to watch the embers glow..."

- **Jim Macnie**, *Village Voice*, March 16, 2010, www.villagevoice.com

"... Ergo are a New York-based trio of trombone, keyboards and drums... They make moody music... Fender Rhodes...and the Prophet synth... remain versatile tone generators...this is no nostalgia trip. The main point of interest is the lead 'bone work, which cuts through the dreaminess of the keys and digital refractions. The trombone treatments are vital to the compositions; this is no mere dub frippery. This disc is best experienced as a suite..."

- **David Dacks**, *Exclaim!*, www.exclaim.ca, October 2009

"Ergo's music is also rooted in jazz, however the New York trio's latest 'Multitude, Solitude' ...is a more experimental affair, fused with electronica and a distinct avant-garde feel. ...quite beautiful and moving...a bit like Sigur Ros meeting Sun Ra uptown. It's also the sort of sound you might hear coming from Manfred Eicher's ECM stable which is no mean recommendation. It is a tribute to Cuneiform that they continue to nurture bands as interesting and diverse as Ergo, Miriodor and Beat Circus and long may they continue to do so."

- **Ian Fraser**, *Terrascope*, April 2010, www.terrascope.co.uk

"... The trio that comprises Ergo...call to mind another idiosyncratic trio...The Necks, but where that estimable triad regale you with a mutable brand of ambient jazz, Ergo opt for a tangible dazzling of the senses. More isn't less here; their panoply of noises sounds like an entire company of artists at work, so outwardly sensate is the entire recording. ...

Sroka's trombone seems to be the sinew holding the whole enterprise together, and he uses it in multiple fashions, both as background coloring and fundamental component. ...haunting environs of "Vessel" is a neat summation (and microcosm) of Ergo's modus operandi: Sroka blows some affecting lead lines around which Baltazor dances... (his flurry of cymbal orthodoxy recalls...Morris Pert and Sun Ra's Francisco Mora) while Maguire paints some subtle kaleidoscopic figures with his numerous keyboards...

...Ergo don't resemble anything remotely traditional... It's apparent they're searching for new contexts and idioms on this...broaching a "fourth-stream"...where abstractionism...is as important in their approach as such hoary absolutes as melody, harmony, and rhythm. ...Ergo...set forth to upset all known jazz apple carts, successfully fomenting new dialogues in the process.

- **Darren Bergstein**, *The Squid's Ear*, December 28, 2009, www.squidsear.com

"... Long tracks with ambient grooves, fine textures, a floating sound. ..."

- **François Couture**, *Monsieur Délire*, November 19, 2009

"This electro-acoustic experimental jazz trio from NYC blend and blur genres via Brett Sroka's trombone and computer, Carl Maguire's Rhodes electric piano, and Shawn Baltazor's drums. The results range from busy complexity to spare atmospheres, pieces that sound like the soundtracks to suspenseful films, or floating dream sequences. ...very rewarding and varied..."

- **George Parsons**, *Dream Magazine*, #10

"... Ergo, at its core, seems as unconventional as they get—trombone, keyboards, drums—creating music that wouldn't have been possible before relatively recent innovations in sound processing and sampling/looping. ... For fans of the improvised, electronics-centric music heralded by the Norwegian musicians in the extended Punkt family, *Multitude*, *Solitude* is a seamlessly organic album of quietude that commands attention from its very first moments.

... This is music that evolves slowly, almost imperceptibly; yet for all its freedom, there's no shortage of structure. Closer in ambience to classical chamber music, the album's two longest pieces are particularly compelling. "Endlessly (multitude, solitude)," with its layers of trombone—in Sroka's hands, truly a vocal instrument—possesses the same paradoxical stasis-meets-forward-motion of Norwegian saxophonist Trygve Seim's outstanding *Sangam*...

Shorter pieces...rely on processing to allow Sroka to build up layers of trombone. ... Hints of Philip Glass, Steve Reich, and Terry Riley imbue Sroka's writing, but never come to the forefront.

... Like Norwegian artists like Arve Henriksen, however, Sroka takes a different approach to composition, one where improvisation and structure work hand-in-hand, each feeding the other. *Multitude*, *Solitude*'s 50 tranquil minutes ebb and flow with stunning realism in a landscape of otherworldly textures."

- **John Kelman**, *All About Jazz*, January 4, 2010, www.allaboutjazz.com

"Keyboardist Carl Maguire... trombonist/computer operator Brett Sroka and drummer Shawn Baltazor spawn an experimental muse, where rigid definitions or categorizations, justifiably fall flat. ...

The band delves into numerous jazz improvisation and subtle electronics-based offshoots via quietly changing themes and floating soundscapes. Baltazor's rumbling drums often serve as a contrapuntal effect during the temperate moments, as he also injects shades and hues with textural cymbal swashes. Sroka's moody lines elicit tension-and-release formats amid laid-back choruses, to complement the unit's generation of subtle dynamics and crashing cadenzas.

...intuition plays a vital role throughout. ...it's an oscillating and persuasive venture...where no hard and fast rules apply."

- **Glenn Astarita**, *All About Jazz*, January 8, 2010, www.allaboutjazz.com

“This is a trio working the electro-acoustic margins...and whilst Ergo's music often flirts with ambient notions, there is equally a predominant air of unease about their work...

...the overall effect is tantalizing in its indeterminacy.

... "Endlessly (Multitude, Solitude)" makes the point. Here, keyboardist Carl Maguire—the man who's responsible for some of the stimulating releases of recent years with his band Floriculture—generates all kinds of excuses for stasis with near-static, repetitive keyboard figures, even as the music develops a kind of distinctly non-linear flow. The result is almost an uneasy compromise between two arguably irreconcilable notions...the trio is adept at thinking as one. The outcome of the collective ideal is...a seemingly infinite capacity for reflection, even while the music never drifts into the background. ...” – **Nic Jones**, *All About Jazz*, January 16, 2010

“Trombonist Brett Sroka’s dreamy trio makes small, incremental moves sound profound, mixing together some ominous keyboard tinkle, a bit of digitally enhanced brass, and enough textural percussion to keep the whole thing fluid. Rather unique. ...”

– **Jim Macnie**, *Village Voice*, November 9, 2011, www.villagevoice.com

“A trio of drums, electric piano + synths and trombone, although trombonist and bandleader/composer Brett Sroka spends at least as much time creating and processing sounds on the laptop, which...gives this band a fairly unique sound palette... *Multitude, Solitude* presents...something of a hybrid between minimalist jazz and dreamy ambient sounds and bits of everything else thrown in, with some electronic sound effects in the mix as well. ...always inviting, there is a lot more going on here – far more than one suspects at the first listen, slowly revealing itself one level at a time after numerous plays. ...the end result seems very expansive...overall peaceful mood. The title track and “Vessel,” both at twelve minutes, are the standout cuts where the players fully stretch out, yet the three shorter cuts and especially “Actuator”...contribute to this disc’s magical spell”

–**Peter Thelen**, *Exposé*, Spring 2010

“...*Multitude Solitude*...plunges into the sleepy bluesy watery languor of the 12-minute *Vessel*, good exam[ple] of how the trio smother simple melodies into viscous trombone-piano interplay against the backdrop of inventive and tumultuous drumming. The mostly tender *She Haunts Me* peaks with a very haunting middle section in which the keyboards whisper to each other. ...*Actuator* is the most abstract piece. “

–**Piero Scaruffi**, www.scaruffi.com

“...Carl Maguire on Fender Rhodes, Prophet synthesizer, and effects... I’ve run into Maguire before – a fine pianist who pushes the state of the art in postbop compositions, but he’s less distinctive here. ...*+” – **Tom Hull**, “September 2010 Notebook,” tomhull.com

“When...composer and bandleader Brett Sroka is credited with playing ‘trombone and computer’ you might surmise that this isn’t your standard guitar-bass-drums outfit...

...The opening *Rana Sylvatica* gives a good indication of what the listener can expect: sparse Rhodes piano notes are gradually underpinned by some humming electronica and heavily crushed cymbals, with three elements intertwining and gradually building in intensity. Sroka’s trombone playing is first heard on the more expansive *Vessel*...it gives the material a slightly mournful feel. ...there are sections that appear at least partly improvised in addition to more structured parts... The trio reach almost King Crimson...levels of intensity at various stages, with Baltazor’s complex yet powerful drum work leading the way.

...*Endlessly [Multitude, Solitude]*, is a similarly complex and intense piece... In contrast, both *She Haunts Me* and *Little Shadow* have a laid-back, almost positive vibe...The closing *Actuator* has a pulsing keyboard-led rhythm...and a sea of hazy trombones floating around...leading to a powerful, bassdrum-heavy climax.

Ergo have certainly produced an original and thought-provoking album here; at different time it’s both challenging and relaxing listening, and what can start as atmospheric music ideal for chilling out to late at night frequently becomes something more claustrophobic and abstract. ...fans of experimental, minimalist modern jazz will be the main fan base...but fans of latter-day Talk Talk, David Sylvian...and even...King Crimson could well find this album to their liking. Conclusion: 7 out of 10.”

– **Tom De Val**, *Dutch Progressive Rock Pages*, vol. 10, 2010

“...Ergo’s *Multitude, Solitude*...meld electronics with jazz improvisation and instrumental technique. The result is a trio that interacts like one but also accesses the broader sound palettes and ambiance that electronics allow.

On most tunes, trombonist Bret Sroka remains at the music’s center and in only rare instances plays over the electronics. This ability to interact in a “jazzy” manner is not only due to Sroka’s comfort...with the format but to drummer Shawn Baltazor, who adds coloration along with a coordinating rhythm. Carl Maguire likewise uses Rhodes, synth and electronics to both color and lead...

While Ergo doesn’t swing in the traditional sense, structure, melody, instrumental interaction and...mood are at the core of their approach. The overall sense...can be a bit ominous and foreboding. Opening “*Rana Sylvatica*” presages this with its dark hues, crashing cymbals and fleeting electronic notes... “*Vessel*” is exactly that, Sroka stating and restating gracefully mournful trombone lines that seem to hang in space...“*Actuator*” closes things out with a bit of space funk as Ergo leaps past electronic/acoustic animosity for a winning trio session.”

–**Elliott Simon**, *All About Jazz*, March 6, 2010

“Critic’s pick: Ergo + Alec K. Redfearn and the Eyesores. ... Ergo’s trombonist Brett Sroka, keyboardist Carl Maguire and drummer Shawn Baltazor are all part of a generation for which Autechre and Sigur Ros are as pressing a concern as Armstrong and Sun Ra. That’s certainly evident in the spacey contours and slinky grooves heard on the trio’s latest release, *multitude, solitude*.”

–**Time Out New York**, March 15, 2012

“...dig your slow gravity orbit around the smoldering remains of mood jazz,...the static-fuzzy, electronica-infused way you transmit your data back to the home world...the graceful tumble through space that is how you manifest said orbit.”

–**Alex V. Cook**, “Let’s Review some records!”, *Alex V Cook Blogspot*, July 6, 2012