

Yurodny | The Journal of Music



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Evenset, Diatribe (DIACD008)

'Balkantown' is just one of *those* opening tracks. A brief, highly energised, free-time fluttering trumpet duet gives way to a dirty trombone and drum-kit groove that is pure excitement. Strings and accordion enter and state a kind of kinetic head in a dark, chromatic mode. No sooner has the music built up steam than it stops dead in a tense cloud of upward string glissandos, only to reintroduce the groove on double bass, muted piano and drum kit – a masterstroke of orchestration. A trombone solo follows, imbued with a lazy menace reminiscent of some of the brass work on Radiohead's 'The National Anthem'. The music breaks apart again – grasping, restless, extemporising solo violin over a repeating cimbalom cell – before that groove comes back again, not a moment too soon, not a moment too late. The track ends soon after, not in the kind of ecstatic rock-out that that such a groove begs for, but in a terse coda that could almost be a new direction. Rather than dying a noble death of exhaustion, the energy of 'Balkantown' lingers in the air, demanding your continued attention into the next track.

Evenset's opener is indicative of where the album as a whole is at. The ensemble's first record for Dublin label Diatribe, *Odd Set*, was, essentially, a compendium of sensitively arranged, dazzlingly executed pieces drawn from Klezmer, Macedonian, Romanian, Bulgarian and Serbian folk traditions. *Evenset* is an album of original compositions that skilfully blends styles, materials and procedures from a wider range of sources. The same traditional Eastern European and Klezmer musics are present, but jazz procedures and harmonic languages now flavour their music to a large extent, particularly in Francesco Turrisi's slow-burning 'Folia'. So-called 'totalism' and the psychoacoustic-effect-centred language of Giacinto Scelsi are echoed in Adrian Hart's screeching album closer, 'Scrub Systems'. Mihály Borbély's 'Balkantown' and Nick Roth's 'Griffmadár' place the compositional

emphasis squarely on groove-work in a manner that recalls New York trio Medeski, Martin and Wood.

Yurodny's mission statement is an elegant call to arms: 'Why is this cross-pollination of significance to musicians? Linguistically speaking, in order for intelligent communication to take place, the language of one must be absorbed by the other. Is the same thing true for the language of Music? ... [I]n terms of musical development we as human beings have not strayed so far from the original source language. Music is a common human tongue.... By ... focusing attention, in research, development and performance, on the potential to create and learn together, we fulfil the promise of Music to enrich and deepen our appreciation of one another and of ourselves.' Whether you think of Yurodny as an Eastern European folk band, a jazz ensemble or a contemporary music group, *Evenset* is where they invigorate the traditions from which they come with ingredients from elsewhere. And the result bears repeated listening.

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