



**Noah Kaplan Quartet
Cluster Swerve**

Cluster Swerve

While Idle and Sun Ra focus on the macrocosm, Noah Kaplan focuses on the micro. It’s apparent in his explanation of Cluster Swerve, the CD title that translates the concept of the opening track: “*Cluster Swerve* was inspired by Lucretius’ theory of the swerving movement of atoms as they fall, which he called *clinamen*. This image illustrates for me a guiding principle of this music. Each player is in an ever-changing relationship to the others, continually shifting perspective and points of interaction. The quartet is a collision of conversations between parts that form a single sonic organism. Another intriguing aspect for me is Harold Bloom’s use of the idea of the swerve to describe the nonlinear path of artistic influence.”

Noah Kaplan’s music isn’t just moving, it’s teeming, and the particular locale of Kaplan’s lines is between the existing ones, insinuating original meanings in gaps between the pitches, definitions and notions that were there before. That concern with artistic lineage is an important one for Kaplan (he acknowledges the influence of composers from Josquin to Schoenberg and saxophonists from Coleman Hawkins to Joe McPhee), emphasized in his first CD’s title, *Descendants*. It’s a natural concern for a young musician, but the choice of that image from Lucretius gives it an inevitability, demonstrating remarkable wisdom for a musician born in 1984.

While Kaplan’s compositions often suggest arcane themes, drawing titles from social science (“Entzauberung”) and entomology (“Sphex”) and coining words (“Exheaval”), his version of the standard “Body and Soul” immediately reflects his original take on the tradition: “‘It is the tenor saxophone song,” says Noah, “also it’s a song I’ve always loved. I’m fascinated by the idea of taking a standard, in this case one with an exceptionally beautiful melody, and smearing and stretching it with microtones.”

Joe Maneri is a central influence here, and Noah Kaplan recalls his studies with the microtonal master at the New England Conservatory: “I spent years studying harmony and counterpoint with Joe Maneri, and composed motets and fugues to learn how to combine and manipulate musical ideas. We would also improvise on classical forms, developing spontaneous melodies and phrases and weaving them into a larger formal framework.”

Another key teacher at NEC was guitarist Joe Morris, who not only played in Maneri's band, but is a member of Kaplan's quartet. Morris brings a special mastery of quarter-tone playing to the quartet, something that contributes much to the band's striking sound. "Joe Maneri would not let me use a glissando or stretching of notes to deal with the microtones, so I came up with a different solution where the stretch is done before the string is plucked. It's a technique I invented in the 90's. I don't use a fretless guitar. I don't change the tuning, it's a standard tuning on a regular guitar."

Noah Kaplan played in Morris's ensemble at NEC—"We played material from the free jazz repertoire, things like Ornette, Mingus and some Monk"—but Morris's presence in the quartet clearly has special significance. "Since having the opportunity to play with him," Kaplan says, "I've learned so much. Joe is a master of articulation, and he has what seems like an unlimited supply of musical ideas. Playing with him forces me to constantly push to keep up. And such is the subtle nature of his playing, that sometimes, when listening back to music we've recorded, it takes me a minute to figure out that the strange and mysterious sounds I'm hearing are actually coming from Joe. I am intrigued by the opposition of Joe's pointilistic jazz guitar sound with the legato voice of the saxophone."

Ask Morris about Kaplan, and there's clearly mutual admiration: "I like to play in situations where I have to invent a solution for how to play the guitar. I've constantly changed the situation and the demands of the music to expand the challenge, even in my own groups, so that I haven't repeated myself. Playing with Noah is one of those situations. The particulars are not defined. We improvise a dialogue that changes based on what happens sound to sound. It's a challenge on every performance and recording to invent the music."

The quartet's development has benefitted from its consistent personnel. Noah remarks that, "Jason Nazary is one of the most creative and sensitive drummers I've heard. His approach to rhythm is fascinating, often shifting chaotically between rock and jazz. Jason plays electronics on *Cluster Sverve* which adds a new edge with a stronger noise element."

Bassist Giacomo Meregá is one of Kaplan's closest musical associates, in fact he's appeared on virtually every recording Kaplan has so far appeared on. They play together in the band Dollshot in which Noah's wife Rosalie Kaplan sings songs by Schoenberg, Ives and Poulenc, and they've recently recorded in other contexts. Noah comments, "Giacomo and I had an instant, intuitive connection the first time we played together. He has a very individual style that I love, blowing contrapuntally over the music at times, while giving the foundation that a bass player has to provide."

Joe Morris neatly sums up Kaplan's talent and his potential: "Noah is a very skilled and mature improviser. He knows who he is. His confidence allows him to stay open to new ideas and to keep searching. Given the chance to work all the time, I think he would take the saxophone to many more new places. He uses technique with control and inspiration to make his own music. He got a lot from Joe Maneri. But I can say—as someone who has worked with both of them—that Noah has his own thing and he has years ahead of him to grow it. Joe knew that and I know that Joe would love what Noah is doing with the material he got from Joe."



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Joe Morris

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Noah Kaplan *tenor & soprano saxophones*
Joe Morris *guitar*
Giacomo Meregá *electric bass*
Jason Nazary *drums & electronics*

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|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| 1 | Clinamen | 4:47 |
| | ISRC CH 131.1701482 | |
| 2 | Entzauberung | 6:40 |
| | ISRC CH 131.1701483 | |
| 3 | Body And Soul | 10:22 |
| | by Johnny Green | |
| | ISRC CH 131.1701484 | |
| 4 | Sphex | 7:04 |
| | ISRC CH 131.1701485 | |
| 5 | Virago (blues) | 12:30 |
| | ISRC CH 131.1701486 | |
| 6 | Exheaval | 16:30 |
| | ISRC CH 131.1701487 | |
| Total Time DDD ²⁴ Bit | | 57:59 |

All compositions by Noah Kaplan (except otherwise indicated), Tuhtah Publishing SUISA.

Recorded April 2011 by Nick Lloyd at Firehouse 12; Mixed by Nick Lloyd; CD-master by Peter Pfister; Liner notes by Stuart Broomer; Cover photo by Hans Hagen Stockhausen; Liner photo by Matt Mahurin; graphic concept by fuhrer vienna; Produced by Noah Kaplan and Rosalie Kaplan; Executive production by Christian C. Dalucas, Bernhard "Benne" Vischer & Werner X. Uehlinger.
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File under: Jazz/Free Improvisation

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OLOGY

Albert Ayler Quartet
European Radio Studio
Recordings 1964
hatOLOGY 678

Anthony Braxton
Quartet (Santa Cruz) 1993
2nd set
hatOLOGY 714

Cecil Taylor
Garden - 2nd set
hatOLOGY 720

Uwe Oberg
Work
hatOLOGY 740

Ellery Eskelin
Trio Willisau - Live
hatOLOGY 741

Anthony Braxton, Quartet
(Basel) 1977
hatOLOGY 676



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