

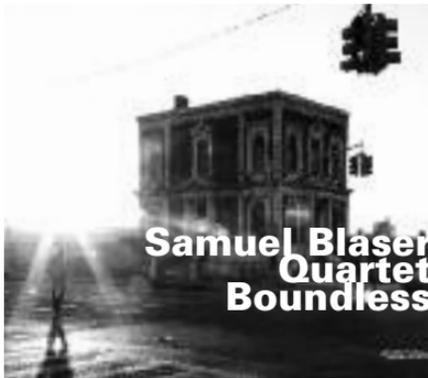
A black and white photograph of a utility pole with a transformer and power lines against a cloudy sky. The pole is the central vertical element, with a transformer box mounted on it. Several power lines are visible, some crossing the frame. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**Samuel Blaser
with Marc Ducret
Peter Bruun
Taktlos Zürich 2017**

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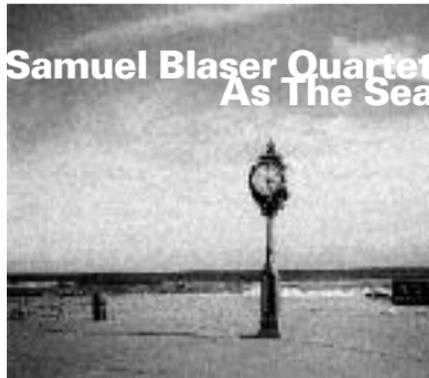
One of the enduring pleasures of improvised music is the ceaseless manner in which seemingly disparate players can at once glean common musical footing and yet remain reliably and completely themselves in ensuing exchanges. Swiss trombonist Samuel Blaser and French guitarist Marc Ducret certainly fall under this meritable mantle with a mutability of expression that can accommodate virtually any spontaneous context. Nearly a quarter-century separates them in age, but the music-making language they speak together as peers preserves the fulcrum of improvisation at its forefront.

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Ducret's most prolific partnership is with American Tim Berne as represented by well over a dozen recordings and innumerable concerts with saxophonist's numerous bands. Occasional and erroneous comparisons to Pat Metheny remain hopelessly reductionist and deficient in describing the diversity of his fret-centered tool box. Blaser's associations include formative projects with the late Paul Motian and fellow Hat Hut recording artists Russ Lossing and Gerry Hemingway. Blaser and Ducret's professional relationship dates to the dawn of the last decade and includes two earlier albums for hat*LOGY* *Boundless* (2011) and *As the Sea* (2012) alongside a schedule of touring.

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Duo became trio after a downtime poolside dialogue between Blaser and Ducret in Cabo Frio, Brazil on one such itinerary. Danish drummer Peter Bruun seemed like a felicitous fit and beginning with an inaugural gig in May of 2013 at the Jazzdor Festival in Berlin the three players began extensive tours of Europe, Asia and South America. Blaser estimates roughly 120 concerts over the ensuing years, no meager feat considering the band had yet to cut a commercial recording. Radio broadcasts and YouTube footage served well as marketing materials instead and Blaser found the flexibility of 21st century means for regional and global promotion refreshing, although the itch to release a formal document remained a persistent concern.

Three days prior to the Taktlos gig chosen toward that end and presented here, bad luck befell the band and Blaser was involved in a bicycling accident in Berlin. The wheels of his conveyance became ensnared in the tracks of a tramway and the outcome was an assemblage of scrapes and bruises and more seriously, a broken rib. Patched up and fortunate that his injuries weren't more serious, a prescription of pills helped assuage the pain. Blaser jokes that the steady diet of medication doesn't seem to have impacted the music in any invasive or adverse way.

Visually from the Taktlos stage, the trio echoed their surface stylistic differences. Ducret, often hunched or bobbing and weaving to the implicit ensnaring rhythms, bedecked in sunglasses, skullcap and cape scarf, affects the itinerant air of a punk rock bedouin. Brunn is lanky and long-limbed, black dinner jacket and white t-shirt suggesting a smirking nod to the usual attire-bound trappings of a concert performance. And then there's Blaser, spectacled and clean-countenanced, in a snug-fitting dress shirt, jeans and Chukka boots. Throughout, he shows no signs of peripheral pain in the graceful movements of slide and mute which facilitate the myriad sounds loosed from the bell of his horn.

Parsed into four discrete pieces, the Taktlos performance is a fluid exercise in revolving roles from the jump. Ducret trades in jagged punctuations, mercurial arpeggios and swollen drone bursts on *Stoppage*, the first and longest. Blaser reacts as balm, his lubricious lines drawing a direct invisible lineage back suave and soothing bop purveyors like J.J. Johnson and Eddie Bert. A reversal and it's Blaser with low brass growls as Brunn colors the corners and edges keeping a rhythmic presence which bolsters and ornaments without drawing attention away from the colloquy of his colleagues. A drum solo filled with fluid, frothing beats works as both palate cleanser and reset into an ambling blues. Later, a froggy brass ostinato serves a similar purpose signaling first clean picking from Ducret and then feral, sharp-fanged blasts of distortion.

The three shorter pieces delve into different combinations. Bruun's mallets and brush work frames an opening of high fretted-picking and metallic, slide-tempered smears on a menacing rendering of an *Igor Stravinsky* motif. Ducret deploys some bass-associative techniques including string-slapping and tapping as the piece threads in another of his originals, *Useless Knowledge* and shifts into a somber reverie section steeped in legato trombone patterns, rich in pathos and tonal purity. Blaser brings corpulent multiphonics fully to bear on *Jukebox* against a faint accompaniment from Bruun as Ducret skulks around the edges, gaining velocity for a solo stacked with tightly deployed clusters. Riffs materialize and dissipate with regularity over variable speeds and the in-the-moment error of an audibly dropped stick is folded purposefully into the performance.

Ducret's *How To Lose* serves as closer and launches as a loosely-structured dirge, luminous overlapping tones, bowed metal, muted brass murmurs and crunchy guitar effects all converge and diverge in the service of keeping the audience guessing. Frenetic mallets and a serrated guitar drone land on another ostinato from the leader, shifting the focus to fractured funk. The delicate, madrigal-like dénouement that drifts into silence on the agency of Ducret's strings couldn't be more different from the aural sketches that preceded it. Accidents and injurious outcomes are among the possible perils for a trio on tour, but Samuel Blaser proves unequivocally in the company of comrades Marc Ducret and Peter Bruun that unforeseen circumstance can't keep an indefatigable improviser down.

Samuel Blaser
Marc Ducret
Peter Bruun

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Derek Taylor

Samuel Blaser Trio Taktlos Zürich 2017

Samuel Blaser *trombone*
Marc Ducret *guitar*
Peter Brunn *drums*

- | | | |
|---|--|-------|
| 1 | Stoppage
<i>by Marc Ducret</i>
ISRC CH 131.1701471 | 24:28 |
| 2 | Fanfare For A New Theatre
<i>by Igor Stravinsky (1964)</i>
Useless Knowledge
<i>by Marc Ducret</i>
ISRC CH 131.1701471 | 9:43 |
| 3 | Jukebox
<i>by Samuel Blaser</i>
ISRC CH 131.1701471 | 9:20 |
| 4 | How To Lose
<i>by Marc Ducret</i>
ISRC CH 131.1701471 | 12:28 |

Total Time DDD ²⁴Bit 56:02

All titles (except Fanfare ... by Igor Stravinsky)
Tuhtah Publishing SUI SA

Recorded live May 5th, 2017 at Taktlos Festival, Rote Fabrik Zürich by Jeroen Visser; Festival organized by Fredi Bosshard; Mix and CD-master Peter Pfister; Liner notes by Derek Taylor; Cover photo by Luca Buti; Graphic concept by fuhrer Vienna; Produced by Fredi Bosshard/Fabrikjazz, Samuel Blaser, Christian C. Dalucas, Bernhard "Benne" Vischer & Werner X. Uehlinger.

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