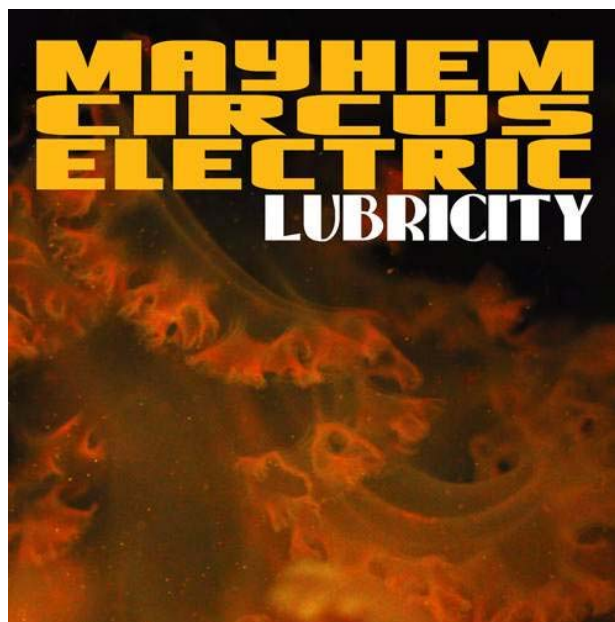


CD Review

By Brian LaRue

Wednesday, November 17th, 2010

Mayhem Circus Electric, *Lubricity* (NHIC Records, nhic-records.com). Birthed from the exploratory jazz ensemble New Haven Improvisers Collective, Mayhem Circus Electric present an 11-song, 54-minute-long set of improvisations around basic melodic or rhythmic themes and motifs, which is pretty much what it sounds like. Oftentimes, saxes and electric guitars careen gleefully in free, seemingly chaotic skronkitude. Sometimes the storm clouds part and a sunbeam of a melody shines through, but always there is an underlying method at work. Drummer Steve Zieminski and bassist Pete Brunelli maintain the tracks on which this headlong train of a band rolls, their tight post-funk grooves acting as a rhythmic reference point for everything else, boiling over and joining in the crazy fray when the build-ups demand it, but always returning to their home base.



Keyboardist Nate Trier is the group's secret weapon here, his melodic organ and electric piano lines serving as the Rosetta Stone through which listeners who aren't necessarily accustomed to avant-garde jazz may read the method behind what seems to be madness. And truly, the brightest-shining moments on *Lubricity* are those where the group keeps nudging the dynamic from strict method to melodic anarchy, like the pulsing, energized "Big Primpin'," and the epic "Sequential Circuitry," which veers through a number of movements, including a great example of instruments locking into a complementary rhythm even as the notes they're playing seem to clash harmonically. MCE asks a lot of the listener, with *Lubricity*'s long runtime and frequent free-jazz experiments, but if you're prepared to really listen, the rewards are myriad and exciting.

Mayhem Circus Electric holds a CD release show Nov. 20 at Firehouse 12 with NHIC Atlas.

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