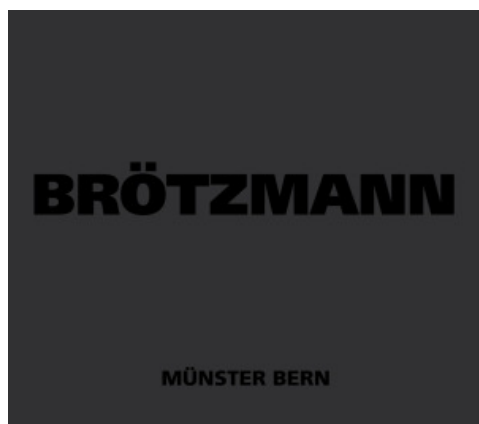


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Peter Brötzmann – Münster Bern + Brötzmann, Edwards, Noble – Soul Food Available

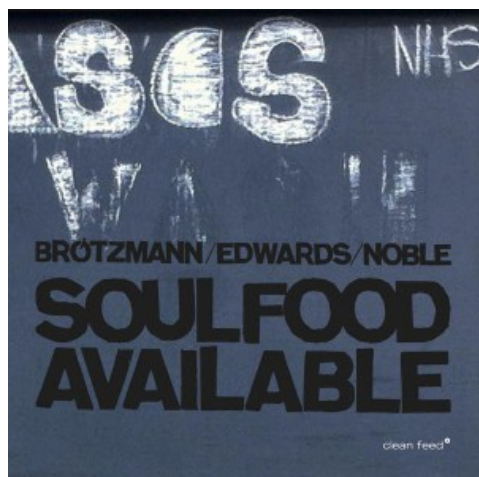


These albums present two very different sides of German free jazz saxophonist Peter Brötzmann. Both are concert recordings, captured only three months apart. *Soul Food Available* (Clean Feed), is a trio date that has Brötzmann and co. tearing new holes into European free music. The solo *Münster Bern* (Cubus), on the other hand, has its intensities but is overall a more thoughtful and introspective set.

Both are all-acoustic, but otherwise they represent extremes of Brötzmann current range (not much sign, these days, of the seriously playful music Brötzmann made with Han Bennink and Fred van Hove circa '71).

Münster Bern documents Brötzmann's solo concert, in October 2013, at the Gothic Bern Minster, Switzerland, and it's very much a site-specific performance: the cathedral's huge reverb saturates everything. With no architectural compression to damp Brötzmann's characteristic lung-bursts they hang in space, assuming a dimensionality that the saxophonist can sculpt.

The clarion cries that open "Bushels and Bundles", with Brötzmann on tarogato (Hungarian reed instrument), offer a precis of his blunt, declamatory style, but also



seem to suggest, if only in passing, muezzin calls and traditional Balkan music. Ranging freely through various modes, Brötzmann turns introspective before lofting again in flocking high-register trills and increasingly sour brays. It's a great example of Brötzmann unfettered; much freer than his literary-inspired solo studio outings such as *14 Love Poems* (FMP, 2004).

The longest cut, "Crack in the Sidewalk" is played on alto, patiently for the most part. Phrases unfurl almost languidly, in melodic rumination, and bracingly acidic spikes of intensity only serve to highlight the deftness of the saxophonist's lyrical instinct. At ~7:30 he plays something that reminds me of Don Cherry's "Brown Rice", then teases and tears the germ of that melody apart, following a chain of association that takes him into rougher waters.

Brötzmann switches to clarinet for the initially hushed and haunting "Move and Separate", before punctuating any sense of introspection with harsh spikes of emphasis and abrupt, vaulting squeals. Then, lapsing into calmness, he again reaches through beauty to grasp a thornier proposition. Each piece develops as a rich, multi-faceted character study of the chosen instrument.

"Chaos of Human Affairs" has Brötzmann, on tenor now, ranging freely in an Ayleresque mode

of exhortation, ending on what could be a straight quote from a spiritual. Then there's just an encore piece, still on tenor, "The Very Heart of Things", which begins as another new take on Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman" (Brötzmann played it on baritone on *14 Love Poems*, and on alto on the solo portion of *Solo + Trio Roma* (Victo, 2012)), but Brötzmann opens the piece up and vigorously dissects it before returning to its starkly beautiful theme.

Of the very many albums to Brötzmann's name, *Münster Bern* is one that can offer obsession-slaked completists something new.