

## WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT:

### POSITIVE CATASTROPHE

### GARABATOS VOLUME 1

### CUNEIFORM

2009

*Line up:* Taylor Ho Bynum (cornet, flugelhorn, co-leader), Abraham Gomez-Delgado (vocals, percussion, co-leader), Jen Shyu (vocals, erhu), Matt Bauder (tenor sax, clarinets), Michael Attias (baritone sax), Mark Taylor (french horn), Reut Regev (trombone), Pete Fitzpatrick (guitar), Alvaro Benavides (bass), Tomas Fujiwara (drums).

“...I have to confess to a **real weakness for the kind of small ensemble or little big band sound that even the 10tet Positive Catastrophe represents.** ...this size of ensemble and this sensibility continues to present **some of the most creative opportunities to make exciting music in Jazz.**”

...Positive Catastrophe is an exciting project. ...all these cats play, and the results...have got a bit of Microscopic 7tet in them, and a heavy dose of the fun and the complexity of Sun Ra, too. Jen Shyu has a fine alto voice, and plays the June Tyson role on “Travels,” the band’s tribute to the Arkestra. But she sings a more straight, big band vocal on “Stillness/Life” and she plays the erhu throughout... **The Latin touch that Gomez-Delgado and his associates bring to the music is a subtle but solid ground for the Spaceship Ho Bynum leads. There’s nothing quite like it that I’ve heard. Their roots go back to Don Cherry’s MultiKulti, and there is more than a little of all the great works on the Asian Improv label here too. But [Garabatos Vol. 1 has] got its own sound, and a beautiful one at that. ...Jazz needs a whole lot more of what these cats bring! ...”**

–Phillip McNally, *Cadence*, January 2010

**“An eclectic, inventive, original and sometimes overwhelming mix of big band, Latin, world, free and downtown clatter jazz.** ... Fascinating and diverse with great playing from all concerned, the one live track - *Travels Parts 3 & 4* - melds all their influences into a cohesive whole and shows them at their best. ... This album feels like a portfolio, showcasing examples of everything they do...”

–Dave Foxall, *Jazz Journal*, April 2010

“Some of the richest streams of American music intersected in the Dizzy Gillespie Big Band of 1947 when Cuban conga drummer Chano Pozo integrated the polyrhythms of Afro-Latin music with bop harmonic improvisation, advanced counterpoint and large ensemble power. Many of **those elements became a tradition in the music of Sun Ra, and it springs to life anew with a Latin emphasis in Positive Catastrophe.**...co-led by cornetist Taylor Ho Bynum and percussionist and vocalist Abraham Gomez-Delgado, Puerto Rican-born leader of the Latin big-band Zemog El Gallo Bueno. **The result is a heady combination of writing and collective improvisation, thick Caribbean rhythms and songs geared to serve as lounge music in a science fiction film.** Bynum and Gomez-Delgado split the compositions and lyrics, with the former seemingly favoring Sun Ra and Mingus, the latter Gillespie and Mario Bauzá. ... The compositions inspire fine solos throughout – from Bynum and Bauder, certainly, but there are highlights--funky or exploratory – from baritone saxophonist Michael Attias, guitarist Pete Fitzpatrick and trombonist Reut Regev who contribute tremendously to the band’s rare combination of raw drive and high invention. ... The band demonstrates **a riffing energy that will instantly let you know comparisons to Gillespie, Sun Ra and Mingus aren’t misplaced.** For a band best savored live, Positive Catastrophe has made a fine debut CD.”

–Stuart Broomer, *Point of Departure*, #24, www.pointofdeparture.com

“... **The biggest components are Latin and avant jazz... The end product isn't predictable, though, as the interconnections of the various elements are continually writhing away... the horns are bustling and charging ahead, sometimes delivering themes and at others firing off stray shots.** ... On the opening "Plena Organization," Bynum is crackling with a caustic ferocity, chased by a continually pulsing bass line that binds all the frantic parts together. ... **There's an equality between free stretches, riffing syncopations and nostalgic swing balladry, stretching from ballroom glide to belligerent barging.** Matt Bauder's tenor saxophone might be at its most startlingly velvety on one tune, but then the next number will rear up with the distorted flash of Pete Fitzpatrick's guitar. ... Formlessness vies with jumpin' throughout its procession...”

–Martin Longley, *All About Jazz / NYC Jazz Record*, May 2009, www.allaboutjazz.com

“Touted as a confluence of Sun Ra and Eddie Palmieri...the debut album by New York's ten-piece Positive Catastrophe "little big band," presents a canny blend... PC bring the avant-gardist pedigree from Bynum and the Latin groove quotient from Gomez-Delgado, and the mixture usually clicks. The complex multi-layered Latin groove and interlocking horn and rhythm section parts of the opening "Plena Organization" jab with unison stops and starts before seguing into a percolating vamp beneath Bynum's flailing cornet solo buildup... **The transmutation of Latin into something else is already complete, and the album has scarcely begun.** Singer Jen Shyu opens "Travels, Pts. 1-2" with some spacy vocalizing...that brings the Sun Ra connection front and center. "Plena Sequiro" begins with high spirits and punched-up ensemble workouts until Shyu brings her erhu -- another element of **pan-cultural surprise** -- into the mix...

...the democracy inherent in the ensemble's design gives everyone chances to shine... **Despite the Latin groove episodes driven by Gomez-Delgado's percussion, *Garabatos, Vol. 1* is ultimately -- aside from the party-ready live material -- creative music for listening ... Creative big band and avant jazz listeners should find plenty to enjoy here,** while those more attuned to straightforward Latin jazz and pop might wish the band would engage in a bit less rhythmic interruptus, keeping those infectious beats churning away longer before diverting attention toward more exploratory fare. [3.5 stars]”

–Dave Lynch, *All Music Guide*, www.allmusic.com

“This raucous 10-piece ensemble...has a new album, “Garabatos Volume One” (Cuneiform), which nails its **distinctive blend of Afro-Cuban rhythm and freewheeling improvisation.** ...”

–Nate Chinen, *The New York Times*, May 7, 2009, www.nytimes.com

“It’s **Latin-based but it’s pretty far from any preconceptions you might have.** ... These guys can play it low and mellow as a nearly forgotten dream... Or skinned and spinning through time like a comet. ... **Blurring worldwide influences into something that pays tribute to the history of jazz and Latin music in a reverent yet utterly reimagined form. Very beautiful throughout, and highly recommended.**”

–George Parsons, *Dream Magazine*, #10

“A peculiar twist on a Latin big band...I hear some things I like, especially in the engine room, where Michael Attias's baritone and Reut Regev's flugelbone try to keep things moving.”

–Tom Hull, *Jazz Consumer Guide*, #21, www.tomhull.com

“...co-leaders Taylor Ho Bynum...and Abraham Gomez-Delgado... **blend jazz, salsa, rock and blues to create dazzling, and memorable music.** Though Bynum and Gomez-Delgado are votaries of improvised music, they do not forsake structure. Both streams are assimilated judiciously amalgamating brilliant hues and shade for a record that is **full of surprise and delight.** ...

Vocalist Jen Shyu is an accomplished stylist who mirrors the lyrics to reflect the emotional path with a high degree of sensitivity. She is at home on

the beautiful ballad "Stillness/Life," ...just as much as she is on the improvised terrain of "Travels Parts 1 & 2." Her voice assumes an ethereal quality floating in and out of the sparse instrumentation. ... Shyu turns her vocals into improvised art.

"Post Chordal" is a triumph of juxtaposition, the different parts forming a tangible whole. And so **a funereal blues, a trenchant march and an Oriental melody are comfortable mates...**

**Positive Catastrophe is a little big band that parlays disparate tendencies into one atmospheric whole within which they churn a plethora of visionary signatures. ...**

—Jerry D'Souza, *All About Jazz*, www.allaboutjazz.com, October 9, 2009

"There has always been a strong case to tear down the walls that divide music in the past two hundred years—especially in the 21st century. ... One of the best examples of this comes in the form of Positive Catastrophe...*Garabatos Volume One*.

The record appears to be a series of loosely connected pieces—sketches... The music is mostly tonal in nature... "Travels Parts 1 & 2" and "Travels Parts 3 & 4" break the mold, and Jen Shyu's stream of consciousness vocals skitter and glide across the melody very beautifully as the music courses with Mingus-like bravado. ... Although this is a deliberate ensemble effort, some soloists do give spectacular accounts... Jen Shyu...vocalizes...with the bell-like clarity of a burnished trumpet. Reut Regev brings folksy growls...singular voice on the trombone... Her...singing on "Stillness/Life" are positively seductive... Michael Attias' gritty baritone voice is always in commanding character throughout. ... A myriad of shades and colors results, making the musical experience all the more enticing.

**Positive Catastrophe is by no means the first band to create...this polyglot/Esperanto idiom of music. Some of the comparatively shorter work composed by Mingus in the very early fifties was similarly ahead of its time... However, much praise is due to Positive Catastrophe for pulling off *Garabatos Volume One*...**

—Raul D'Gama Rose, *All About Jazz*, January 24, 2010, www.allaboutjazz.com

"Best of 2009... 8. Positive Catastrophe "Garabatos Vol.1"..."

—Christian Broecking, *Jazzhouse Diaries*, December 7, 2009, www.jazzhouse.org

"25 Notable CDs... Positive Catastrophe, *Garabatos: Volume One* (Cuneiform)"

—W. Royal Stokes, "W. Royal Stokes' Best CDs of 2009", *Jazzhouse Diaries*, December 29, 2009, www.jazzhouse.org

"Jazz Critics Poll 2009: LATIN ... Positive Catastrophe: *Garabatos Volume One* (Cuneiform)"

—W. Royal Stokes, *The Village Voice*

"...Positive Catastrophe, has recently completed its debut full-length, *Garabatos Volume 1* (Cuneiform), and **it's a doozy: a wonderfully lush and unusual Latin-jazz party record. ...**"

—*Time Out New York: The Volume*, May 8, 2009, newyork.timeout.com

"Puerto Rican native Abraham Gomez-Delgado...moved to the U.S. when he was just six... On last year's *Garabatos Volume One* (Cuneiform) he co-led an off-kilter ten-piece big band called Positive Catastrophe with trumpeter Taylor Ho Bynum, moving even further down the road from dance music to jazz—it **sounds like the Sun Ra Arkestra playing Eddie Palmieri charts. ...**"

—Peter Margasak, *Chicago Reader*, April 2010

"... They wowed an appreciative crowd at Zebulon, where some of this disc was recorded, and will likely do the same here. Expect **swing arrangements that suddenly dissolve into blurts, feints and jabs, strong solos from saxophonists Matt Bauder and Michael Attias, rock touches** provided by guitarist Pete Fitzpatrick **and occasionally spacey vocals** from Jen Shyu. It's all **enriched by liberal doses of sophisticated musical humor. ...**"

—Paul Blair, *Hot House*, January 2011

#### CONCERT REVIEW

"The season for creative music opened with several roars: Ornette Coleman triumphed at Jazz at Lincoln Center – **Positive Catastrophe at the New Languages Festival was an absolute delight** — Los Angeles trumpeter Bobby Bradford lead an ace quintet at the Festival of New Trumpets at the Jazz Standard ... **Both Secret Society and Positive Catastrophe** (led by cornetist Taylor Ho Bynum) **are large ensembles that work more out of jazz traditions than any other, but are not your parent's big bands. ... PC...puts out a joyous storm of improvisations set in smart, melodic compositions.** At no time in the past 10 years would I have guessed that the big (or little-big) band would gain this kind of refreshment from up 'n' coming players, or draw equally youthful and hippish crowds. **There's nothing overly intellectualized or ultra-traditional in either ensemble, both offer simply fun times, and generously so...**"

—Howard Mandel, "Last week in New York beyond jazz", *Jazz Beyond Jazz*, October 4, 2009