



Bio information: **ROB MAZUREK OCTET**

Title: **SKULL SESSIONS** (Cuneiform Rune 349) Format: CD / LP / DIGITAL

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**FILE UNDER: JAZZ / AVANT-JAZZ**

What does it sound like when worlds collide? For the protean cornetist, composer, and conceptualist **Rob Mazurek**, the fusion of his celebrated **Exploding Star Orchestra** with his roiling Brazilian ensemble **São Paulo Underground** ignites a beautiful cosmic burst. *Skull Sessions*, the first release by the newly minted **Rob Mazurek Octet**, captures a series of shimmering, enveloping jazz soundscapes. *Skull Sessions* is composition and group improvisation as revelation, epic in scope, crackling with unexpected reactions and volatile collisions, charging the atmosphere like a thunderstorm that washes away all manner of sonic detritus. **Cuneiform**, the American label that also released Sao Paulo Underground's most recent album, is releasing *Skull Sessions* in CD format and as a limited-edition, high quality vinyl pressing of 250 copies, which includes a digital download card.

A force on Chicago's singularly inventive sound scene for two decades, Mazurek is an intrepid sonic explorer eager to investigate new configurations. From his variable **Chicago Underground** units (duo, trio, quartet, and orchestra) to the Exploding Star Orchestra, **Starlicker** and the **Pulsar Quartet**, he's mastered a protean approach in which his collaborators give substance to a composition's form by creating layers of sound. Lapidary and luxuriant, marked by an accretion of simultaneous lines and textures, *Skull Sessions* features an international cast of masters from North and South America, including drummer **John Herndon**, vibraphonist **Jason Adasiewicz**, flutist **Nicole Mitchell**, **Guilherme Granado** on keyboards and electronics, **Carlos Issa** on guitar and electronics, **Mauricio Takara** on percussion and cavaquinho (Brazilian ukulele), and **Thomas Rohrer** on C melody saxophone and rabeca (a rustic Brazilian viola associated with the northeast).

Rather than creating opportunities for solo expression, Mazurek's music generates a forum for group discovery. "The soloist is not the main concern," he explains. "The concern is personalities blending sound ideas that have the potential to expand or contract at any given moment in order to find the hidden spaces that must exist for the elevation and understanding of the origin of where we possibly come from and where we might be going."

The big bang that led to *Skull Sessions* detonated when the **We Want Miles** exhibition at **SESC (Serviço Social do Comércio) São Paulo** requested that Mazurek devise a presentation related to his deep affinity for the music of **Miles Davis**. In characteristic fashion, he decided against recreating any of Davis's music, instead composing new pieces and rearranging earlier works for the Octet's particular personalities and unusual timbres.

The album opens with the expansive "**Galactic Ice Skeleton**," a piece Mazurek originally composed for the Exploding Star Orchestra. Reborn here as a plasmatic cloud held together by the gravitation force of a surprisingly pacific melodic theme, the piece moves with its own subtle logic. As waves of sound expand and contract, the center morphs and mutates, an expression of the evolving group will.

"**Voodoo and the Petrified Forest**" grew out of a theme Mazurek originally conceived for the Chicago Underground Duo. He repurposed it for Starlicker, and in its latest incarnation it reemerges via the Octet as a seductively undulating dance that shifts and shimmies with mercurial pulses driven by Adasiewicz's incantatory mallet work and Herndon's polymorphic trap set churn. Mazurek calls the eternal dance between stasis and movement an expression of "ritual music" built on "repetitive and shifting sequences...the group creates a tornado of shifting rainbows as Nicole Mitchell darts and dashes above the fray." As the theme resurfaces, Mazurek's majestic cornet, augmented by ring modulator, rises out of the sonic swirl.

If "**Ice Skeleton**" and "**Petrified Forest**" feel like churning tempests, "**Passing Light Screams**" rises like an eagerly awaited dawn. Mazurek's cornet introduces a folk-like theme through a scrim of percussion and vibes, building to a lustrous ballad. As the full octet chimes in, the piece evolves into a picaresque journey, with each player offering narrative guidance. At once sacred and profane, sophisticated and elemental, the piece is a fitting homage to the great French/Chilean filmmaker **Alejandro Jodorowsky**.

Originally composed for the trio Starlicker, "**The Skull Caves of Alderon**" opens with the pulsing strains of a disabled vibraphone that sounds like a gamelan orchestra welcoming the ancestors. The horns too evoke a Balinese ensemble, as the music builds and builds with a glorious crescendo. After the heat and earthy celebration of "Alderon," the album closes with "**Keeping the Light Up**," a gossamer improvisation for flute, rabeca, and electronics. Suggesting both birth and death, the piece brings the karmic cycle full circle.

If *Skull Sessions* seems to encompass a vast expanse of sonic terrain, it's because the album is very much the result of Mazurek's far-flung creative journey. After a fruitful eight-year sojourn in Brazil, he recently returned to Chicago, where he first gained notice as a visionary player and composer. Born in 1965 in New Jersey and raised in the Chicago land area, Mazurek immersed himself in

*[press release continued on verso]*

Chicago's bustling jazz scene in the 1980's, where he honed his skills playing with icons of the music such as **Jodie Christian, Earma Thompson, Robert Barry** and **Kenny Prince**. In 1994, Mazurek launched the forward looking **Chicago Underground workshop** at Chicago's storied jazz club **The Green Mill**. Eventually the workshop gave birth to the Chicago Underground Collective, an ensemble that recorded several albums for **Delmark** and **Thrill Jockey** records and featured many of the scene's rising stars (including guitarist **Jeff Parker** and drummer **Chad Taylor**).

Over the years Mazurek has become an essential catalyst on the international scene, collaborating with a wide cross section of leading figures in jazz, rock and improvised music, including **Pharoah Sanders, Bill Dixon, Roscoe Mitchell, Mike Ladd, Isotope 217** and **Nana Vasconcelos**. One of his most important vehicles has been his constantly shifting Exploding Star Orchestra, a capacious inventive large ensemble featuring the likes of **Nicole Mitchell**, John Herndon, and on occasion, Takara, Granado and Adasiewicz. Increasingly recognized as a creative force outside of the United States, he was awarded France's prestigious grant/residency at the **Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud** in 2005, which gave Mazurek the opportunity to hone his interest in multi-media works. The following year he debuted the São Paulo Underground, a powerhouse ensemble that has released three acclaimed albums, most recently 2011's *Tres Cabeças Loucuras* on Cuneiform. Fusing jazz, Tropicalia and electronics, *Tres Cabeças Loucuras* won mention on numerous 2011 Best of Year lists in multiple genre categories. Mazurek then topped off a highly productive 2012 by being voted Musician of the Year – in a title he shared with **Wadada Leo Smith** – by Italy's top magazine for contemporary jazz, *Musica Jazz*.

In addition to his recent musical achievements, Mazurek continues to develop as a visual artist (incorporating sound, painting, installation and video) with numerous international performances, exhibitions and artist residencies. In 2010, he received the Commissioning Music/USA grant from Meet the Composer for a multi-media work developed in collaboration with video artist/choreographer **Marianne Kim**. His works have been exhibited throughout the US and Europe, most notably at the Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas, where his paintings hang on the office walls.

A master at co-mingling potent artistic media and personalities, Mazurek had no shortage of talent when it came to assembling the players for *Skull Sessions*. Asked to summarize his new group, Mazurek noted: "Featuring some of the most exciting musicians from North America and South America, Rob Mazurek's Octet ROCKS." The bios below contain comments from Mazurek on each musician's contributions to *Skull Sessions*, as well as a self-bio Mazurek provided on our request.

*For more information on the Rob Mazurek Octet, see:*  
[www.robmazurek.com](http://www.robmazurek.com)

*"This music was created in response to a request to present something concerning my affinity towards the music of Miles Davis at the We Want Miles exhibition at SESC Sao Paulo Brazil. As I do not believe so much in re-creating someone else's music, I suggested I compose new music and re-arrange some previous music for this Octet for it's uniqueness of sonic timbre, somewhat strange instrumentation (cornet with ring modulator, rabeca (a north eastern brazilian viola), c melody saxophone, vibraphone, flute, piccolo, voice, noise guitar, electronics, bass synth, cavaquinho (a Brazilian ukulele), drums) and unique personalities.*

*This music is an amalgamation of ideas based on vocabulary I have been developing over the years with like-minded souls and various ensembles. My affinity and respect for the music of Miles Davis is total, and I sometimes make my music with the thought "what if Miles walked into the room while this music was happening...? Would he approve...?"... Probably not... But one must try.... "*  
– Rob Mazurek 2012

## **ROB MAZUREK OCTET: BAND MEMBER BIOS**

**Rob Mazurek**, currently living back in Chicago after an 8 year living experiment in Brazil, creates sound with the thought of Universal Love Wave Correspondence. AND HE MEANS IT. The commingling of personalities is his concern, and his compositions and suggested groupings of improvisations on this set of tracks, set the scene for a truly remarkable experience. Thinking constantly about the idea of layerings, Mazurek over the years has created multiple sound worlds with multiple configurations of humans (Chicago Underground Duo, Trio, Quartet, Orchestra, Exploding Star Orchestra, Sao Paulo Underground, Pharoah Sanders and the Underground, Pulsar Quartet, Starlicker) based on the premise of democratic sound rendering and personal frequency statements. The soloist is not the main concern, the concern is personalities, blending sound ideas that have the potential to expand or contract at any given moment in order to find the hidden spaces that must exist for the elevation and understanding of the origin of where we possibly come from and where we might be going. With over 200 published compositions, Mazurek continues to expel sound at an alarming rate, as a personal means of transformation and self discovery. His work with the late Bill Dixon is of particular note, and he has shared the stage with magical music makers from Pharoah Sanders, to Cannibal Ox to Roscoe Mitchell to Mike Ladd.

**Nicole Mitchell** is a world-renowned improviser, composer and conceptualist, and a master flute player; no one has done more in recent years to extend the flute's capabilities technically and spiritually. A third generation AACM artist based in Chicago, Mitchell leads her science fiction-informed **Black Earth Ensemble** among a myriad of other ambitious projects. Of her work on Skull Sessions, Mazurek noted that she "brings a dynamism to the group that is as powerful as it is subtle. ...Nicole's contributions on this recording are uplifting and joyous. Especially of note is her rendering of melodic and sound ideas on the closing track, (a suggested improvisational grouping), that absolutely and eloquently places the period on the end of this harrowingly beautiful suite of music....".

**Mauricio Takara** is a master percussionist who's also accomplished on the electrified Cavaquinho, a four-string Brazilian instrument that resembles a ukelele and is traditionally used to propel samba. The "darling of Sao Paulo sound wizardry", **Takara** occupies a central role on São Paulo's teeming creative music scene, working in a "myriad of avant guard as well as popular and traditional Brazilian and non-Brazilian medians". Besides

such Brazilian projects as his own **M.Takara 3**, **Hurtmold** and **Sao Paulo Underground**, he's worked with everyone from **Pharoah Sanders** to **Prefuse 73**, to **Bill Dixon** to **Marcelo Camelo** to **Archie Shepp** to **Kassin** to **Exploding Star Orchestra**. On *Skull Sessions*, Mazurek says: "of particular note is Mauricio's use of the electrified Cavaquinho to set up song structure perfectly and noise it up at the perfect time. His conga rhythms evoke the mysteries of time and space. They are a prime element in why this music feels so good amongst the chaos of multiple sound worlds."

**Jason Adasiewicz** is one of the vibraphone's top young players, ranked among the top Rising Stars in numerous Critic's Polls. A composer as well as a performer, he has forged a singular style encompassing the energy and force of rock drumming with the harmonic subtlety and melodic sensitivity of post-bop jazz masters like **Bobby Hutcherson** and **Walt Dickerson**. A key figure on Chicago's thriving jazz scene, the *Chicago Reader* named him 2011's Musician of the Year. Adasiewicz leads several ensembles devoted to his own compositions, including the trio **Sun Rooms**, and **Rolldown**, his quintet with **Josh Berman**, **Aram Shelton**, **Jason Roebke**, and **Frank Rosaly**, which released the critically acclaimed album *Varmint* in 2009 on Cuneiform. A member of Mazurek's **Starlicker**, Adasiewicz played in earlier formations of the Exploding Star Orchestra. He also collaborated with **Mike Reed** in the group **Living By Lanterns**, who released *New Myth / Old Science* on Cuneiform, a Sun Ra-inspired album that ranked prominently on many of 2012's Best of Year lists. Adasiewicz "creates waves of sound," says Mazurek, who calls him "the destroyer of Vibraphones throughout all continents! ...but don't sleep on his subtlety, as his gentle approach to certain sections of this 5 song suite is remarkable, and the way he is able to caress sound out of a destroyed vibes is best recognized on "The Skull Caves of Alderon", in which he manipulates said instrument in a most unique and dazzling way."

**Guilherme Granado**, hailing from São Paulo, is highly skilled, in-demand bassist. He's performed and/or recorded with a wide variety of musicians, including **Prefuse 73**, **Nana Vasconcelos**, **Tulipa**, **Roscoe Mitchell**, **Bill Dixon**, **Pharoah Sanders**, the Exploding Star Orchestra, and many others. Granado is also the bass synth motor for the São Paulo Underground, an integral member of the Brazilian Rock group **Hurtmold**, and has also released two records under **Bodes and Elefantes**, his solo project. Regarding his work on *Skull Sessions*, Mazurek notes that Gui "brings this energy to the fore in this Octet, with his dexterous drunken master hidden dragon 'Ol Girly Bastard left hand kung fu on the nasty keyboards and samplers, a true leader in the dissemination of beauty noise and low end Chaos..."

**John Herndon** is best known as a founder of the celebrated post-rock band **Tortoise** and the large ensemble Exploding Star Orchestra. A powerhouse on the drum kit, Herndon is a key figure on Chicago's avant music scene, playing and recording on dozens of projects, including **Isotope 217**, **Ken Vandermark's Powerhouse**, **SoundSoft Pow**, and **Starlicker**. Herndon also creates remixes under the name **A Grape Dope**. On *Skull Sessions*, Mazurek notes that Herndon "takes the sound of drumming to new heights, propelling the group in all directions at once while somehow keeping a clean line through the universe of layer upon layer upon layer expounded by the octet... check out his dizzying beats on "Voodoo and the Petrified Forest"... a maelstrom of ritualistic fervor..."

**Thomas Rohrer**, a Swiss expatriate who has lived in São Paulo for the past 15 years, is a musician of rare subtlety who also thrives in high-energy musical contexts. Supremely versatile, he collaborates with avant guard and free improvisers from Europe, US, Brazil and Asia; plays Brazilian pop music with **Marcelo Camelo**; and regularly performs with traditional musicians in Brazil's creatively fervent northwest, which is where he picked up the Rabeca, a Brazilian viola often used in forro. Regarding his work on *Skull Sessions*, Mazurek notes that Rohrer "brings a texture to the Octet with his Rabeca and C Melody Saxophone that is truly original, using glissando as a main ingredient and infusing the tracks with the sound of deep Brazilian roots as well as Xenakis like experimentation..."

**Carlos Issa**, a guitarist and sound/noise artist, is best known in Sao Paulo for his solo work as **Objeto Amarelo**, an electronic noise project he has been developing for years. Issa is also a graphics/visual artist, and Mazurek notes that Issa's visual sensibilities "comes through strongly in his interpretations of the music heard here. Carlos creates twisting sheets of sound, reminiscent of the colorful clouds in Sao Paulo's sulphur-infused skies. It is rare to find someone who can introduce hardcore noise into music with such playfulness and thoughtfulness that it elevates it to new heights. Of particular note is his soloistic etude amongst the din of the group, played towards the end of "The Skull Caves of Alderon," that propels the Octet to the final ending crack."

## PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS



Digital [High-Resolution] versions of these images and more are available for download on [www.cuneiformrecords.com](http://www.cuneiformrecords.com)

## WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT

### SÃO PAULO UNDERGROUND

### TRÊS CABEÇAS LOUCURAS

### CUNEIFORM

### 2011

Line-up: **Rob Mazurek** (cornet, electronics, voice), **Guilherme Granado** (keyboards, electronics, voice),

**Mauricio Takara** (drums, percussion, cavaquinho, electronics, voice), **Richard Ribeiro** (drums, voice)

w/ special guests: **Kiko Dinucci** (guitar, voice), **Jason Adasiewicz** (vibraphone), **John Herndon** (drums), **Matthew Lux** (bass guitar)

"...São Paulo Underground has definitely found its footing, nailing an elusive meeting place between continents. The Post-Don Cherry melodic splendor of Chicago cornetist Rob Mazurek has never been clearer, and it finds a simpatico home amid the polyrhythmic chaos

**forged out by his Brazilian cohorts. ...all eight pieces concern themselves with various sorts of collisions—gentle vs. harsh, melodic vs. noisy, human vs. machine...stunning balancing acts. *Tres Cabeças Loucuras*...is the first SPU record to so clearly tap into Brazilian traditions...** “Pigeons” is built upon a traditional maracatu piece, but Mazurek’s powerhouse peals and snaking lines, some fuzzed-out keyboard riffs and the muted clatter of criss-crossing beats render provenance immaterial... “Carambola”...only hints at tropical sounds until the outro, where a brief melodic fragment shoots for Carnival bacchanalia. ... **This high-energy romp takes the sting out of the term fusion in the best possible way.** [Rating: 4.5 stars] —Peter Margasak, *Downbeat*, February 2012, Volume 79, Number 2

“... **No matter what he plays, Mazurek executes on cornet with a delicate beauty**, even as he channels his mentor Bill Dixon’s guttural blasts. **São Paulo Underground...creates dreamy sound sculptures. ... In a way, SPU’s sound resembles dub reggae, where disembodied sounds fly in and out of the music over a simple chord structure.** However, that music relies on bass... Instead, drummers Mauricio Takara and Richard Ribeiro and keyboardist Guilherme Granado create polyrhythmic grooves for Mazurek to color. “Jagoda’s Dream” combines tense drumming with a long-tone cornet line, the perfect example of Mazurek’s lyrical depth. ...” —Mike Shanley, *JazzTimes*, April, 2012

“...São Paulo Underground's new album is titled *Três Cabeças Loucuras*... **The music has the heavy feel of street culture, evoked by parade rhythms, extreme distortion like a boombox with blown speakers playing a stepped-on cassette, and the collisions of competing sounds in one open space.**

**... I can't think of another album that does quite what São Paulo Underground's latest does.** It's very melodic and full of rude noise, often at the same time. **The music can be as dense as a Sun Ra freakout and sunny as a Pat Metheny tune. ... This record's got it all, all at once.** —Kevin Whitehead, “Two South-American Jazz Fusions (No, Not That Kind)”, *NPR Music*, www.npr.org

“A few years ago, the Chicago-based cornetist Rob Mazurek... formed a new band (São Paulo Underground) that **combined his Chicago Underground group dynamic and investigations in electronics with sounds from the Amazon.** ... Its new release...brings together a collage of samples, loops and keyboard effects that buttress Mazurek’s stirring cornet tone. ...cavaquinho player Mauricio Takara and percussionist Guilherme Granado are as well-versed in electronica as Mazurek is. Some Chicagoans make guest appearances—like vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz and drummer John Herndon—and **the combined collective strength is reason enough to take this act on a global tour.**”

—Aaron Cohen, “Editor’s Pick”, *Downbeat*, November 2011

“... It is impossible to ignore the attack of **São Paulo Underground—musical terrorists of a different kind**, their approach similar to that of Bill Laswell, yet different. ...**On *Três Cabeças Loucuras* the cultures of the urban and the urban underground collide.** ... The mangled electronics nestle cheek by jowl with the aching lament of the cavaquinho. Rob Mazurek's cornet sounds a loud wail as the assault on the senses is made. ... This is music made out of the same dust that created the men who live it—a raw, beautiful lifestyle where the sadness of the choro can also mean utter joy...” —Raul D’Gama Rose, *All About Jazz*, March 13, 2012

“...Though Mazurek’s Underground incarnations have been more concerned with grooves and melodies than many of his other projects, ***Três Cabeças Loucuras* presses further into the melodic traditions of his second home. The music here very much bears Mazurek’s style, but it also combines the experimental jazz traditions of Sun Ra to create a type of “cosmic tropicalia.”** The “miniature guitar” plucking of the cavaquinho combines with deep, buzzing synthesizers, noisy effects, and Mazurek’s effortless cornet fluctuations, allowing listeners to enjoy melodies as well as timbral depth. ...” —Scott Morrow, *Alarm*, October 11, 2011

“***Três Cabeças Loucuras*...is the third release from São Paulo Underground to explore the furthest fringes of Brazil's revolutionary Tropicalia movement. Updating the renowned genre's patented psychedelia with free improvisation, laptop-driven electronica and musique concrete, the album unveils a spectrum of kaleidoscopic sound that pushes the bounds of each style to its limits, creating a new, unclassifiable amalgam in the process.** ...Mazurek's imaginative approach encompasses limitless sonic possibilities—all of which are entertained in this unrestrained environment. ...

**The record's prevailing mood is one of celebratory innovation and bold experimentation. ... Brazil's Tropicalismo movement has come a long way since the seminal efforts of Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil. ...*Três Cabeças Loucuras* is more than just a jazz-based extrapolation of a venerable form—it's a fascinating new hybrid.”** —Troy Collins, *All About Jazz*, October 26, 2011

“This is a very interesting group that combines jazz composition and improvisation with electronics and effects to create an intoxicating and exotic blend of music. ...The music on this **album deftly mixes influences: contemporary Brazilian music, electronics and spiritual jazz like an updated version of Pharoah Sanders early 70's groove-free LP's**... The music...defies any particular box or category...”

—Tim Niland, *Music and More*

“There are times when I come across **a jazz album that breaks through traditional boundaries and creates something that is quite different to anything I have heard before, and that is definitely true of this the SPU’s third album. ... There are pieces that are very dreamy, with keyboards and electronic sounds being quite reminiscent of Can, while at others this is full-on.** Mazurek has studied with Art Farmer, and it shows, while of course Miles Davis is also an obvious inspiration although Mazurek himself states that Bill Dixon is his biggest inspiration. ...**this is an inspired album that fans of jazz or avant-garde music in general will get a great deal from.**” —Kev Rowland, *Amplified*, #123, October 2012

“... Takara, Granado and Ribeiro are all percussionists, but each man contributes something else as well...like keyboards, looped samples, vocals, or the cavaquinho... **The result is a music filled with buzz and clatter, with Mazurek’s smeary, sometimes electronically manipulated horn meandering through the center of the sonic jungle. Melodies emerge like the harmony between multiple music boxes playing different but complementary songs at once, intricate polyrhythms gradually emerging like a huge system of tiny gears clicking into place. It’s got almost nothing to do with the common perception of Brazilian music (lilting, breezy, ephemeral); it sounds more like Battles attempting to interpret pieces from Miles Davis’s *Agharta*.** ...in a compact 38 minutes; it’s practically an EP. ...concision is a virtue, allowing the group to explore ideas in compelling ways but stop before they become boring. ... Mazurek and his partners know when—and how—to leave the listener wanting more. ...”

—Phil Freeman, *Burning Ambulance*, October 24, 2011

“**On...*Tres Cabeças Loucuras* (Cuneiform), cornetist Rob Mazurek and his band Sao Paulo Underground finally tapped into the musical traditions of their namesake city, in the process making their best album by far. ... On the new one his two main partners...Guilherme Granado and...Mauricio Takara, play a larger role, which includes injecting explicitly Brazilian flavors—Takara...composed two of the album's strongest**

pieces and played lots of *cavaquinho*... On the gorgeous album opener, "Jagoda's Dream," Mazurek renders the pretty melody with a clear tone and generosity of spirit that recalls Don Cherry... **"Pigeon" is based on a traditional maracatu piece, but its fuzzed-out keyboards, cornet overblowing, and clattering percussion make it one of the most abstract tracks on the album. ..."**

—Peter Margasak, *Chicago Reader*, September 23, 2012

**"... A magnificent chaos like an analog samba through ancient-like *modules*... São Paulo of the future, like a sound which is studiously broken and traditional at the same time. ..."**

—fragile balloon, *breakplate*

**"Sao Paulo Underground takes the fertile and endlessly productive Brazilian strains of samba and other indigenous outcroppings and combines them with modern electric jazz in some very new, creative ways. ... The group features cornet-composer extraordinaire Rob Mazurek, who has been doing some remarkable music in and around Chicago as well as around the world... The...album is an unusual mix of rhythmic excitement, cornet-wielding goodness, hip tunes and neo-psychedelics. It's an excellent listen, modern and electric without a trace of cliché."**

—Grego Applegate Edwards, *GappleGate Guitar and Bass Blog*, November 28, 2012

**"... Três Cabeças Loucuras is an exhilarating experience, as it is simultaneously retro and avant-garde. ... The densely textured, often ethnic flavored music is electronically heavy deconstruction of familiar themes. ... Mazurek's cornet has a visceral and organic feel as it lets out series of assertive calls that contrast nicely with the synth-pop-ish background. ... Futuristic techno-surroundings enhance the intense angularity. Psychedelic Caribbean sounds abound on the hypnotic and mesmerizing "Just Lovin',"... "Colibri" is a fantastic lullaby with Guilherme Granado sampling distorted vocal projections that float over the melody. Mazurek's bluesy horn adds a nocturnal feeling to the tune. The remaining three pieces are more cinematic. "Jagoda's Dream" is replete with electronically enhanced percussive vamps. ... Compellingly atmospheric and intentionally short on improvisational rigor, this engrossing disc is nevertheless highly enjoyable and thought provoking with its tight thematic structure..."**

—Hrayr Attarian, *Chicago Jazz Magazine*, November-December 2012

**"...Mazurek is Mazurek, and this is no polite samba or bossa nova repertoire that he's dipping into here with his Brazilian mates. Drums and percussion, courtesy of Mauricio Takara and Richard Ribeiro, more than occasionally raise an unholy clatter, while Guilherme Granado, on keyboards and electronics, produces a variety of heavily distorted effects not intended for the faint of heart. ... In the midst of these sometimes abrasive textures, one can find righteous grooves and even... a lyrical impulse or three – but that's the whole point. ... The funky Latin beats and exuberant, almost ragged percussion of pieces such as the opening Jagoda's Dream and Just Lovin' have a real Carnival or even Mardi Gras feel to them, with the sometimes trancelike riffs locking into quickstep marching rhythms and Mazurek's extremely agile and often dazzling trumpet soaring over the top. ...any suggestion of a conventional jam band groove is moderated not only by track length but by stuttering, skittering electronics and greasy, distorted bass lines from the synth keyboards. ... Jason Adasiewicz brings his vibraphone to Just Lovin' and Six Six Eight, imparting a classic post-bop aura... Mazurek clearly is an artist who likes to take chances, and the occasional excess...is what makes a very high percentage of music on this CD so dynamic and satisfying."**

—William Tilland, *Foxy Digitalis*, February 27, 2012

**"Sao Paulo Underground are one of the heaviest experimental jazz outfits you'll ever come across. ..."**

—Russ Slater, *Sounds and Colours*, November 2011, [www.soundsandcolours.com](http://www.soundsandcolours.com)

**"...From Argentina, Brazil, Panama and Mexico, we've got new songs about traveling: exploring new musical styles, voyaging to outer space, crossing borders and sometimes simply closing your eyes and embarking on a trip through your own mind. ... Carambola... Artist: São Paulo Underground...Album: *Tres Cabeças Loucuras*"**

—Jasmine Garsd, *NPR Music: Alt.Latino*, October 19, 2011

**"...this CD fuses American improv textures with the beats and melodies prevalent in Brazilian music. With both jazz and maracatu based on African roots, the other members of the São Paulo Underground...find common ground with Mazurek through rock and samba beats plus the spirited use of samples and electronics. ...tracks on *Tres Cabeças Loucuras* vary from those whose affiliation seems to be with delicate guitar-strummed pop, including mariachi brass-like echoes, to tough, percussion-hammered near-rock, plus those tunes which could be taken up by the cornetist's jazzier projects... For the jazz samba-familiar, some of the more lyrical tunes with delicate, almost slack-key guitar licks, gentle muted brass lines and rumbling dance-like beats may sound more South American. ... Fusion in its best sense, *Tres Cabeças Loucuras* is open-minded music that melds North and South American impulses without fissure."**

—Ken Waxman, *The New York City Jazz Record*, September 2012

**"...you've got a platter that sounds like few in the marketplace. ... Percolating textures, crackling cornet (smacking of Miles Davis and Don Cherry), and surreal electronica process local riffs and rhythms for music that dances and frolics with all the joy and cheery chaos of a São Paulo street fair. If Syd Barrett lost his mind in Brazil instead of Britain, hooked up with Sergio Mendes and... (...pre-heavy guitar-era Return to Forever) and DJ Logic to town, this'd likely be the upshot. [Rating: 4 stars/excellent]"**

—Mark Keresman, *ICON*, March 2012

**"Sometimes musical taxonomies just don't work, and for that we can be thankful. ... Mazurek's music (and his visual art) focuses on a colorist three-dimensionality that is able to put forth both gauzy thinness and a hell of a lot of mass. ... The opening "Jagoda's Dream" stitches together Tropicália and Windy City post-rock in a seamless, bright fusion of the type that was hinted at on Tortoise's *TNT*. Indeed, motorik keyboards, sunny guitar strums, and relentless John McEntire-esque fast waltz are indicative of a minimalist rock sensibility, while Mazurek's electronically-processed cornet is set apart in both plaintive whines and violent screams. ...The closing "Rio Negro" interpolates overdubbed and processed brass in a way that is reminiscent of composers George Russell and Don Ellis, as keyboard gloop and crunching rhythms give the music a strange lurch and contrast Mazurek's humanity with dark cacophony. ... this is a music that's collectively arrived at, with players and approaches in a continual dance of foreground, background, and allover-ness irrespective of "genre." Taxonomies be damned."**

—Clifford Allen, *Tiny Mix Tapes*

**"...Tropicalia, experimental jazz, progressive rock and many other territories of sound become overly present when you hear this new record of theirs but it's done in the most blended and coalesced way. The pure psychedelia of the record removes any darkness or shade... The experimental and electric jazz work Miles Davis and Herbie Hancock...comes through in full on *Três Cabeças Loucuras*, especially the phrasing Rob Mazurek brings to the album. ... What really makes this album so unique is how much they take from groups as removed in terms of time and followings as Jaga Jazzist and Os Mutantes or Stereolab and The Soft Machine. ... Regardless of the level of experimentalism, there is always a state of groove that exists in every track... Tropicalia never sounded this modern and alive post 70's."**

—Erik Otis, *Sound Colour Vibration*, July 10, 2012, [www.soundcolourvibration.com](http://www.soundcolourvibration.com)

“...from the fertile musical mind of Mazurek... a synthesis of the darker, psychedelic electro-acoustic jazz of his various Chicago Underground projects, and the folksier, sunnier and grounded harmonies of Brazilian music. ... The São Paulo Underground... **“Jagoda’s Dream”...is the love-at-first-listen song that deservedly kicks off this trippy-jazz Amazon adventure.** ...Mazurek’s stroke of genius was to integrate both the dark textures of other Underground projects and the bright melodies of Brazil into a tightly constructed, catchy tune. His cornet rides that melody like Herb Alpert for much of the song, until he goes Art Farmer in the instrumental break, and then you realize there’s a serious jazzman behind this weirdly wonderful slice of inverted pop. That’s one song... **The eccentric use of electronics is often the single biggest factor making this music so hard to pigeonhole, except into the default “avant garde” category.** ... “Colibri” is...deeply submerged, shimmering voice nearly lost in the heavily reverbed mix. ...vivid, quivering sonic textures share the emphasis along with individual performances. ... **Tres Cabeças Loucuras received a lot of shout outs last year, and as one of the most truly original music of any release from 2011, it also has that rare combination of being singular and, in a lot of spots, catchy. ...”**

–S. Victor Aaron, *Something Else!*, September 27, 2012

**“Sao Paulo Underground play an exciting mélange of Brazilian, Jazz, and Electronic music... sounds that conjure visions of tropical vegetation and dense urban jungle through a distorted lens.** SPU's use of electronics with traditional afro-centric sonorities and rhythms adds dimension and excitement.... Whether it's subtle flourishes or heavily processed instruments, it's always integral to the music. ... The first song, "Jagoda's Dream", begins with a sunny keyboard arpeggio and drums while Mazurek's singsong melody gently guides us in. He then breaks into solos punctuated by Freddie Hubbard– like trills that add a slight amount of danger... "Colibri" has a disembodied, heavily processed vocal wafting around... "Just Lovin'" features hanging vibe notes and swinging, crashing drums. ...a kraut-ish feel... "Lado Leste" has an almost oriental melodic intent, with crunchy distortion just out of earshot, wrapping the music in a fuzzy blanket; by the end we are standing inside of a tinkling music box. ... **Overall this record is...texturally rich and dynamic in movement — offering another view into their technicolor, sun drenched sound world.”**

–Matt Schulz, *The Squid’s Ear*, July 9, 2012, www.squidsear.com

**“...Três Cabeças Loucuras...a true group aesthetic took hold, gliding Mazurek’s delay-laden yet dry cornet tones over kaleidoscopic electronics.** ... Hypnotic album opener “Jagoda’s Dream” rides on a driving, **genre-defying dialogue**...while the flickering “Carambola” sets a bright, percussive tropical melody played on Mauricio Takara’s *cavaquinho*...against throbbing synthetic sound washes. A rare tour sees the combo....heading to the Bottle for the first night of the venue’s **annual “outsider sounds” showcase with Brit mag The Wire, Adventures in Modern Music.** The latter seems like the perfect forum for Mazurek, to whom descriptors like **jazz, rock and “world” are irrelevant.”**

– Areif Sless-Kitain, *Time Out Chicago*, September 27, 2012

**“...Cornet player Rob Mazurek, who divides his time between Chicago and São Paulo, is determined to drag Brazilian music into the 21st or even 22nd Century with this group. Their percussive, electronically manipulated sonic jungle is like Brazilian jazz remixed by Autechre.** ...”

– Phil Freeman, “The Most Futuristic Music of 2011”, *io9*, December 19, 2011

**“On its third album, this project of Chicago cornetist Rob Mazurek makes a huge leap, largely by involving its Brazilian members as composers to a much greater extent... Brazilian music...front and center, providing a plush harmonic and polyrhythmic foundation for Mazurek's warm, melodic improvisations.”**

–Peter Margasak, “My favorite albums of 2011”, *Chicago Reader*, December 29, 2011

“...2012 looms, Jerome and *Radio M* host Tony Sarabia pick their favorite music from this year. ...

**Tony Sarabia’s global picks from 2011 (in no particular order) ... Sao Paulo Underground - *Tres Cabeças Loucuras* ...”**

–Tony Sarabia, “Global Notes: Tony and Jerome pick their favorite albums of 2011 (sort of)”, *WBEZ 91.5*, December 14, 2011

**“The results of the annual Jazz Critics Poll... Top ten albums: ... São Paulo Underground, Três Cabeças Loucuras (Cuneiform)...”**

– Peter Margasak, “Music / Post No Bills Jazz Critics Poll results announced”, *The Chicago Reader*, January 11, 2012

**“Rob Mazurek returns to Brazil and floats his cool blue cornet over a spellbinding collage of saturated textures, syncopated rhythms and sundry electronics.”**

– Areif Sless-Kitain, “Top 10 jazz albums of the year”, *Time Out Chicago*, www.timeoutchicago.com

**“6th Annual Jazz Critics Poll: 2011 - Ballot 2011 [Hullworks.net]**

Clifford Allen (The New York City Jazz Record, Ni Kantu) LATIN...São Paulo Underground, *Três Cabeças Loucuras* (Cuneiform)

A.D. Amorosi (Philadelphia Inquirer, Blurt) NEW RELEASES... #10 São Paulo Underground, *Três Cabeças Loucuras* (Cuneiform)

Andrey Henkin (The New York City Jazz Record) LATIN...São Paulo Underground, *Três Cabeças Loucuras* (Cuneiform)

Peter Margasak (Chicago Reader, Downbeat) NEW RELEASES...#6...São Paulo Underground, *Três Cabeças Loucuras* (Cuneiform)

Tim Niland (Music & More) LATIN...São Paulo Underground, *Três Cabeças Loucuras* (Cuneiform)

Derek Taylor (Dusted, Master of a Small House) LATIN...São Paulo Underground, *Três Cabeças Loucuras* (Cuneiform)

Neil Tesser (Examiner.com, Chicago News Cooperative) LATIN...São Paulo Underground, *Três Cabeças Loucuras* (Cuneiform)

Kevin Whitehead (Fresh Air [NPR], Why Jazz?) NEW RELEASES São Paulo Underground, *Três Cabeças Loucuras* (Cuneiform)” – *Hullworks.net*

**“Recommended New Releases... São Paulo Underground - *Três Cabeças Loucuras*”**

–Andrey Henkin, *The New York City Jazz Record*, January 2012, No. 117

**“Best Latin Album... [#]4. São Paulo Underground, *Três Cabeças Loucuras* (Cuneiform)”**

– Francis Davis and Tom Hull, “2011 Jazz Critics’ Poll Results”, *Rhapsody: The Mix*, January 10, 2012

**“Best of 2011...Honorable Mentions... São Paulo Underground - *Três Cabeças Loucuras*”**

–*The New York City Jazz Record*, January 2012, No. 117

**“...It was another great year for jazz releases - in fact, we're still catching up! For anyone who doubts that the genre is vital and offers immediacy and daring, check out the 3 minute tune "Pigeon" above from the wondrous São Paulo Underground. ...**

**...Without further ado, here are this year's prestigious D:O nominees:... Best Album... São Paulo Underground, TRÊS CABEÇAS LOUCARAS...”**

– *Destination Out*, February 22, 2012