

WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT:

THE CLAUDIA QUINTET - *FOR* - CUNEIFORM [RUNE 247] - 2007

“...the title is a pun. Such **personal playfulness keeps with a chamber band that has tickled the ears of adventurous listeners...with its deft blend of improvised jazz solos, run-on, minimalist figures that gradually shift shape and color, and unusual instrumentation.**

The group features clarinet and...accordion playing off shimmering vibes....No matter how dark the music gets – and this album has a more muscular urgency than previous ones – light, beauty, and a sense of well-being always seem ready to emerge. Conversely, as chipper and optimistic as the music becomes, you never feel some easy, new-age...

More than many hybrid jazz forms on offer these days, *For*'s rhythmic propulsion, bursts of blues feeling and first-rate soloing should make it attractive to swing purists who may think it's not 'for' them. **[4 Stars]**”
– Paul de Barros, “Reviews,” *Downbeat*, Vol. 74 No. 10, October 2007

“The ambidextrous title - ...group's fourth album and each song is “for” someone - encapsulates the **multileveled conceptualism** of the contents. This is **modern music that lives in the borderlands between jazz, art rock and chamber music - a state-of-the-art blend of the quirky instrumentation of Tin Hat, the circular melodies of The Penguin Café Orchestra and the explosive rhythm section of the Bad Plus.**

The heart of the band is the polyrhythmic drumming of founder/leader John Hollenbeck... first-rate band... The production is pristine...[4 stars]”
– Peter McElhinney, “Now Hear This,” *Style Weekly*, October 24, 2007

“Since their founding in the late 1990s, The Claudia Quintet has walked a unique path in contemporary jazz. ... **An astonishing band with a huge range of emotional depth and range and with appeal far beyond strictly 'jazz' listeners.**”
– *The Vortex*, www.vortexjazz.co.uk

“...percussionist/composer John Hollenbeck's Claudia Quintet has managed to make each successive release somehow different than its predecessor while not losing site of the markers that define this eclectic and stylistically defiant chamber ensemble. ...**one wants to avoid saying that *For*–The Claudia Quintet's fourth release and third for the equally unclassifiable Cuneiform Records–is its best yet, but it's simply...fact.**

... Hollenbeck's writing, and the way he orchestrates his pieces in addition to the open-mindedness of his band mates, keeps the group's aural landscape as expansive as ever. Traditional instrumental roles are often dispensed with or radically repositioned, leaving everyone the freedom to carve out unexpected territory... **They assimilate the improvisational freedom of jazz with the minimalist pulses and harmonic/contrapuntal complexities of contemporary classical music, the spare and ethereal atmospherics of ambient music, the assertiveness of progressive rock and more.**

All of which can take place in the course of a single composition. ...

...*Semi-Formal* made it onto more than a few critics' lists for best albums of 2005. With a winning streak that's showing no signs of letting up, the challenging yet compelling *For* will undoubtedly find its way onto similar lists for 2007.”
– John Kelman, *All About Jazz*, August 11, 2007

“... “post-minimalism”...the melodies emerge in soft tones, pixilated and dithered... But the self-imposed limits have been discarded for real-world complexity: resonant acoustic instruments, shifting time, even passages where Matt Moran talks and Chris Speed squawks. **Only a dead-ender wouldn't call it jazz. A-**”
– Tom Hull, *Village Voice*, February 05, 2008

“**A small band with seemingly limitless tonal variety, Claudia Quintet vividly bring the theories behind some of the 20th century's leading classical composers to life with first-rate improvising and telepathic interplay....**Leader/drummer John Hollenbeck is not only a master of propulsive rhythms in complicated settings but knows how to compose for the multifaceted ranges of the vibes, accordion and the talents of those who play them. **The resulting tones are so seamless that the sounds of a larger ensemble, or even synthetic tones, are suggested** The compositions fit each member like perfectly tailored suits in pure Ellingtonian fashion....Whether deconstructing Steve Reich or morphing into a Bulgarian wedding band, no twist or turn ever seems forced....it's difficult to pick out the highlights in their repertoire. More bands should have this problem.”

– David Dacks, “Experimental & Avant-Garde Reviews,” *Exclaim!*, 9/2007

“The Claudia Quintet, led (if such a **conversational ensemble** can be said to be led) by New York drum virtuoso John Hollenbeck, was **one of the hit newcomers of the 2007 Cheltenham Jazz Festival.** Hollenbeck's rough equivalent in the UK might be Seb Rochford, in terms of a seamlessly multi-idiomatic rhythmic flexibility allied to a composer's conception. Claudia plays plenty of tough postbop (saxist Chris Speed sees to that), but there are strong folk elements in both the melodies and in the big role for an accordion. ...consistently strong composing. The opening track, shifting through free-jazz, polyphonic clamour and a klezmerish bounce, set against a hip-hop beat, is typical. ...vibes are sometimes gently blended with clarinet and accordion, while lyrical pealing-bells cascades contrast with edgy free-swing. It's all far from just another exercise in eclecticism, and ushers in **one of the most characterful small jazz groups of recent times. [4 stars]**”
– John Fordham, *The Guardian*, August 10 2007

“... Opening track I'm So Fickin' Cool...is **fast-paced and sounds a bit like Jaga Jazzist, but more elegant - grown-up** if you will - even though it's all acoustic. ... Even though the group always maintains elegance, the energy level can rise to exhilarating heights...the album as a whole **breathes good spirit** and the joy of playing music together...[5 Stars]”
– Martijn Busink, *Musique Machine*, www.musiquemachine.com

“...a group that **defies genre categorization.** ...This is chamber jazz at its most unique. ...The Claudia Quintet is the defining aural child of percussionist/drummer John Hollenbeck, and his compositions definitely stray from the norm of jazz. There are **wild drum solos, frenetic hard bop, thick textures, random squawks, East Asian percussive smashes, and infectious grooves,** all within minutes of each other. ...for those forward thinkers, Claudia is an impressive genre pusher. ... [4 stars]”
– Kyle O'Brien, *Jazz Society of Oregon*, October 2007

“...the Claudia Quintet has navigated the **boundary lines between free jazz, contemporary composition, progressive rock and electronica so successfully that its output is virtually uncategorizable.** ...

... this album is comprised of a varied selection of tributes... Alternating jovial melodies and captivating rhythms with bittersweet lyricism and somber reflection, the acoustic quintet spins otherworldly sonic tapestries that occasionally mimic electronic effects.

A Claudia first, “For You,” uses prepared electronic tape and sporadic spoken word to paint a minimally atmospheric tone poem ... it contrasts with the album's inspired hybrid of complex rhythms and intricate harmonic counterpoint...

A fertile blend of infectious grooves, euphonious melodies, rich harmonies, adventurous improvisation and cinematic ambience, *For* is another winning chapter in the saga of the peerless Claudia Quintet.”
– Troy Collins, *All About Jazz*, July 01, 2007

“...One of the more pleasantly ear-tweaking new “jazz” releases of late goes by the deceptively simple title *For* and is by the hard-to-categorize N.Y.C. band known as The Claudia Quintet, on the blessedly fringe-tending Cuneiform label. **There's fire, wit, and more** in this group... Amidst the blustery, free-improv and street-meets-chamber music charmers... Reichman's accordion lends a distinctly colorful twist... Not quite jazz, not quite contemporary classical music, not quite artful noise, **The Claudia Quintet has come up with a new mash-up aesthetic of their own.**”

- Josef Woodard, *The Santa Barbara Independent*, October 4, 2007

“The Claudia Quintet is a jazz group with a seriously hybrid ancestry - **the group combines the shimmering clarity of the George Shearing Quintet with the ADHD adventurousness of John Zorn, the structured dorkiness of a string quartet with the shrieking madness of Albert Ayler. The Claudia Quintet...is one of the most exciting groups in contemporary jazz...**

For is the latest of three discs on Cuneiform.. The shimmer of the Shearing group comes through in the clean blend of vibes, accordion, and clarinet, but the creative bustle of Zorn emerges in the busy, almost mathematical compositions and structured improvising environments. **Each of the discs comes at you with the force of a manifesto: this band knows exactly what it is about, and the compositions charge forward with inevitability.**

Hollenbeck's compositions are both surprising and logical. ...Claudia's music uses the liberties of “free jazz” in the context of extremely ordered writing. The order, however, is new. **Songs rarely consist of easily remembered melodies in 12 or 32 bars; instead they are evolving patterns...** The solos...are improvised elements of the larger design.

...the articulation is precise – and it's all arrayed over an accompaniment that sounds as much like Steve Reich's Music for 18 Musicians as it does like jazz. ...it's almost like a kind of chamber music that emerges from a free jazz sensibility.

... the band now sounds so thoroughly integrated and seamless that you'd think it was a tenor-trumpet quintet or a 16-piece big band. You can almost imagine other clarinet/vibes/accordion groups springing up in its wake. ...The Claudia Quintet, **inimitable**, deserves to inspire. ... **RATING: [7]**”

- Will Layman, **PopMatters**, October 1, 2007, <http://www.popmatters.com/pm/review/48710/the-claudia-quintet-for/print/>

“It's a challenge to describe the Claudia Quintet's sound: there are patent references, but distinct departures from these references as well. ...

Hollenbeck's nuanced part-writing fully exploits the tonal similarities of the frontline...seamless blends and subtle variations that oblige close listening to determine who's playing what. Elsewhere, these **voices interweave with the democratic freedom of a Beethoven string quartet... There is also a nod to the minimalist figurations of Philip Glass and others...concentric looping themes that twist and turn in on themselves like musical möbius strips.**

...odd time signatures and asymmetrical phrase lengths...roll effortlessly off the snare drum. ... In sum, the Claudia Quintet seems to champion process over product, its collective individuality stemming not so much from what is played, but because of how it's played.”

- Tom Greenland, *All About Jazz*, September 11, 2007

“...**this group's material is built upon paradox; ...under the appearance of sheer “linear” themes or minimalist repetitions there's a puzzling world of details and structures** that, taken as a whole, furnish the compositions with the richness that's typical of a great “progressive” band mixing contemporary jazz, Reich, Piazzolla and Bulgarian folk played with the same attitude of a technically hyper-advanced bionic busker. ... astounding musicianship... Don't worry if you can't find a definition for the Claudia Quintet; just rejoice for their newborn creature, as these guys are extremely serious in what they do”

- Massimo Ricci, *Touching Extremes*, October 2007

“The Claudia Quintet has been evolving and shaping its music, creating a potent and forceful presence. They do it with graceful finesse; working the elements to let melody get its due and improvisation mark its presence. ...**Theirs is a sound that flows like a river of shimmering beauty that glimmers, glows and most importantly, runs deep.**

The music challenges norms. What starts out as a bouncy ode, may slip into chamber music and out again, without a grain of emotion sacrificed. Then again the intuitive interplay may find another sound to ferment. Context is never capsized by content. The evolution of these elements and their framing comes to life on “Be Happy.”...

“I'm So Fickin' Cool” is another marvel of concept and execution. ...This is a bright, expressive recording that should grab the listener with immediacy.”

- Jerry D'Souza, *All About Jazz*, January 03, 2007

“...**John Hollenbeck delights in crafting intricate tunes that the musicians can lock in on. And the particular palette he's designed for this group...is endlessly satisfying.**...The music of the Claudia Quintet is warm, inviting, and just a little odd, perfect for revisiting to savor the easy-going drive of the ensemble as well as the contributions of the individual players...”

- Stuart Kremesky, *The IAJRC Journal*, Vol. 41 No. 3, 8/2008

“The trouble, of course with being original, is that the pigeon-holers cannot pigeonhole you and the radio folks won't play you. But then, everyone with an ear for the edge can hip their friends to this Claudia sound.

Not that Hollenbeck and company make it easy for you. ...Just when you think Hollenbeck will zig, he zags. The band combines the Carpenters' (that's right the whacky 1970s pop unit) hit 'Rainy Days’ with Stan Kenton's arrangement of “The Peanut Vendor.” Now, you're wondering, **does Hollenbeck have big ears or is he the Raymond Scott of this new millennium? The answer is yes and, hopefully, yes.**” - Mark Corroto, *All About Jazz*, September 21, 2007

... **Is it rock? Is it Jazz? Is it post-rock? Is it contemporary easy listening? Who cares.** All I know is that it has an accordion, vibes, and clarinet among drums and bass. **What a powerful combination.** ...

This is an album that is not for jazz lovers, or rock lovers; it is for those who like music. ...the time is at hand when kids can't get by with calling something jazz or post-rock anymore. Time has caused such an intermingling of styles that we either need an advanced lexicon full of very specific terminology...or we need to...write about/speak about music in a manner that evokes images over labels. Enjoy. [Score 7.5/10]” - Greg Norte, *The Silent Ballet*, 5/15/2008

“...it's almost like some sort **sublimely surreal travelogue soundtrack**....although there are moments that don't fit that description at all. ...In all, the mixture is quite intriguing....True originality and innovation...”

- Allen Freeman, *Audion*, Issue No. 54

“...Claudia Quintet is known for **sonic tapestries that stretch the boundaries of chamber jazz**....deep grooves are evident here... Single line melodies are rare, though they are used in juxtaposition to tracks that showcase the band members' formidable musical prowess

Sonically, the soundstage opens to accommodate the spacey electronic sounds of ‘For You’ and flexes tighter to hug more muscular tracks. The low end has plenty of punch, and the vibes shimmer throughout. It's great on stereo...”

- George Collins *The Absolute Sound*, 10/2007

“John Hollenbeck’s New York based ensemble...continues to trace an original route through contemporary jazz....**Influences ranging from minimalism to post-rock are filtered through a cutting edge jazz sensibility, and tonalities are predominantly bright**, especially on tracks such as ‘August 5th, 2006’ and ‘Three Odes,’ with their Reichian allusions. A wide range of registers is exploited, from Drew Gress’s pungent bass upwards, and the pairing of accordion and vibraphone as chordal instruments is beguiling. Speed’s facility...adds further possibilities of colour and timbre, and Ted Reichman’s accordion is prominent...”
– Andy Hamilton, *The Wire*, Issue 288, Feb. 2008

“The Claudia Quintet’s latest CD...isn’t for jazz fans only. **Listeners with a healthy appetite for Steve Reich-inspired minimalism, chamber-ensemble ambiance, intricately woven compositions, insistent funk beats and skewed pop – along with hard-bop propulsion and bursts of free jazz – should find something to enjoy on ‘For.’**
Not to mention plenty of wit....Amusing compositional tracks surface in subtle and startling ways on the album, as when the quintet...salutes the Carpenters and Woody Herman with an imaginative (and highly abstract) mash-up of ‘Rainy Days and Mondays’ and ‘Peanut Vendor.’
...Several subdued charmers composed by Hollenbeck also surface: ‘August 5th, 2006,’ a revolving theme....
...the Claudia Quintet is certainly in prime form this time around, with Hollenbeck charting a path that leads to numerous pleasures and intrigues.”
– Mike Joyce, *The Washington Post*, 1/1/2008

“CDs of the Year: Claudia Quintet *For Cuneiform*” – Jez Nelson, *BBC’s Jazz on 3*, www.bbc.co.uk, 12/7/2007

“Critics’ Choice 2007 Claudia Quintet *For (Cuneiform)* – Alexander Gelfand” – *Jazziz*, Vol 25 No.1, Jan/Feb 2008

“With its fourth release, the unit’s mark of distinction moves forward, where strong compositions amid the customary trimmings set forth an **engagingly quixotic listening experience**. ...the musicians’ trademark sound consisting of thumping bass grooves, perky back-beats and complex ostinatos remain intact. As they intermix that sometimes opaque area of tight-knit unity and loose groove improvisation...the band employs punch, zip and buoyantly forceful thematic forays....
With dabs of wit and whimsy, the quintet fuses a sense of intrigue into many of these works. In sum, their deceptively complex modus operandi reminds me of The Beatles large-scale productions...core similarities parallel the making of great music, regardless of genre. To that end, the sum of the many parts and layers, translate into a product that aims to please - in rather grand and attainable fashion I might add.”
– Glenn Astarita, *JazzReview.com*

“Claudia Quintet *For Cuneiform*- Paul Blair (*Hot House*)

Claudia Quintet *For Cuneiform*- Paul de Barros (*Seattle Times, Downbeat*)

The Claudia Quintet *For Cuneiform*- David Frecke (*Rolling Stone*)

The Claudia Quintet *For Cuneiform*- Tom Greenland (*All About Jazz- New York*)”

– “2007 Jazz Poll Ballots,” *The Village Voice*, www.villagevoice.com,12/25/2007

*** LIVE PERFORMANCE REVIEWS OF THE CLAUDIA QUINTET AT 2010 NYC WINTER JAZZFEST***

“You couldn’t fit another person in the Bitter End when John Hollenbeck launched the set by his Claudia Quintet. It was wall to wall....Here’s another band that needs to be recorded live next time. **Their discs on Cuneiform are brainy and attractive. But their gig was brawny and wise....The kinetics spilled...all so tight, it was a whirlwind.**”

– Jim Macnie, “Top Five Moments At Winter JazzFest 2010,” *Lament For A Straight Line*, 1/12/2010

“NYC Winter Jazzfest...showed off 55 bands for the attendees of the convention of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters...gave the rest of us...a deep index of new jazz...the attendance — 1,200 on Friday night, 2,500 on Saturday...
...On Saturday especially you were in a **jazz equivalent of South by Southwest, surrounded by tales of not getting in or of hearing something killer**. ...10 on Saturday I walked over to the Bitter End to see Mr. Hollenbeck’s Claudia Quintet, a band I know and like. **But the house, all standing, was packed...and no one else was admitted**. I watched through the window for a cold 30 seconds but couldn’t see or hear much through the mob. I’m happy to say I have nothing to report.” – Ben Ratliff, “Catching Late-Night Zzzs: Jazz and Buzz,” *The New York Times*, 1/11/2010

“The 2010 NYC Winter Jazzfest...was a stunner.

1. Impeccable booking.

2. Robust crowds....

3. Prompt sets....

4. Tight bands....**The best bands I heard this weekend...John Hollenbeck’s brainy yet fantastically exuberant Claudia Quintet...were those whose members have spent serious time honing their collaboration.**

5. Enthusiastic audiences...**during the Claudia Quintet’s set, you could sense the packed room’s collective jaw dropping at Hollenbeck & Co.’s sprightly virtuosity.**”

– Hank Shteamer, “The top five reasons 2010 NYC Winter Jazzfest was a smashing success,” *Time Out New York*, 1/11/2010

“It wouldn’t be a good festival if you didn’t feel like you were missing something with each choice you made, but I’m confident I made the right one by heading over to the smaller and cozier Bitter End...First was **the Claudia Quintet...What a revelation!** Accordion, sax/clarinet, vibraphone, bass, piano and drums the mix was catchy, eclectic and a lot of fun....**The playing was seamless**. If you don’t love the vibes, you have no soul and the **CQ was deep with the vibraphonics, mixing a groovy jazz with hypnotic undertones. A great find.... Loved it!**”

– “Review: Winter Jazz Fest,” *WeeklyNed*, www.weeklyned.blogspot.com, 1/11/2010

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FOR MORE REVIEWS OF THE CLAUDIA QUINTET’S PREVIOUS ALBUMS INCLUDING *SEMI-FORMAL* and *I, CLAUDIA*,
PLEASE SEE: CUNEIFORMRECORDS.COM