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Bio information: **ERGO**

Title: **MULTITUDE, SOLITUDE** (Cuneiform Rune 289)

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FILE UNDER: JAZZ / ELECTRONICA

"Experimental electronic music from Brooklyn by way of Sun Ra." – Time Out

"...teeming with intuitive experimentation, probing jazz dialogues and EFX-drenched avant-garde stylizations. Uncannily cohesive and an enormously compelling listening experience..." – Ejazznews.com

"... [Ergo]explores the intersections of electronic music, Jazz improvisation, and smart Rock bands like Radiohead or Sigur Ros.." – Cadence

An electro-acoustic sonic arts/jazz trio, **Ergo** seamlessly interweaves jazz and electronica to create music of stark melodic beauty, enveloping texture, and sonic spaciousness. The New York City based group consists of musicians who have played together in various forms since 2003: composer/leader **Brett Sroka** on trombone and laptop, **Carl Maguire** on Rhodes electric piano and analog synth, and **Shawn Baltazor** on drums. *Time Out-NY* noted that the three *"are all part of a generation for which Autechre and Sigur Ros are as pressing concerns as Armstrong and Sun Ra. That's certainly evident in the band's timbral sophistication, spacey contours and slinky grooves."* Drawing from Post-Rock as well as post-Coltrane, remaining oblivious to boundaries of genre or form, and assembling trombones, electronic circuits, drumskins and synths as sonically components on an infinitively textured instrumental palette, Ergo resculpts and edits a widely diverse and musical heritage into a starkly beautiful, and truly 'cool' 21st Century sonic jazz form.

Brett Sroka began his music career as a jazz trombonist, composer and band leader. His first CD, called *Hearsay*, came out on the label **Fresh Sound - New Talent** in 2002 and immediately captured the jazz world's attention. In *Hearsay*, Sroka led a sextet that included jazz pianist **Jason Moran**; the music "navigate[d] between structured composition and improvisational freedom" [*flavorpil.net*]. *All About Jazz* lauded it as "an auspicious debut" and noted that "With his arranging and compositional skills, and his trombone chops, comparisons to the late Trombone Master, **J.J. Johnson**, are inevitable, and deserved."

Shortly after *Hearsay*'s release, Sroka became fascinated with electronic music. He surrounded himself with synthesizers and software, seeking, in his own words, "to reconcile the six hundred years of technology between trombone and computer." Sroka began assembling musicians of similarly elastic and adventurous temperaments in New York City. They began playing local shows in clubs receptive to genre-defiant music like the Mercury Lounge, 55 Bar, and Galapagos, as well as elsewhere in the Northeast Coast, including Providence's AS220. Gradually an idiosyncratic dynamic began to cohere among Sroka and his fellow musicians, and the group **Ergo** was born.

In 2006, **Ergo** self-released its first CD, *Quality Anatomical Music Since 2005*, on its own **Actuator** label. It featured a line-up of **Sroka** on trombone and computer; keyboardist **Carl Maguire** (who also led and recorded with his group, **Floriculture**) on Rhodes electric piano, Prophet synthesizer, and electronic effects; and drummer **Damion Reed** (who also worked with **Billy Higgins** and recorded on **Robert Glasper**'s *Canvas* CD for **Blue Note**). Lauded as the year's "Best Debut CD" by *All About Jazz-NY*, *Quality Anatomical...* received widespread praise from the jazz press. *Ejazznews.com* called it an "Uncannily cohesive and an enormously compelling listening experience" and praised the music as "teeming with intuitive experimentation, probing jazz dialogues and EFX-drenched avant-garde stylizations." *JazzTimes* noted in its review of the CD that "Sroka is more interested in charting new musical territory than simply revisiting the traditions of J.J. Johnson". Indeed, Ergo's music probed well beyond jazz tradition into new, electronically-charged grounds to explore, in the words of *Cadence Magazine*, "the intersections of electronic music, Jazz improvisation, and smart Rock bands like Radiohead or Sigur Ros." Attempting to define Ergo's new sound, *All About Jazz* noted that:

"...saying it is on the "fringes of jazz" or "beyond jazz" is a bit meaningless, but suffice it to say that there are a lot of electronics beyond what a Fender Rhodes can do, and there is nothing remotely close to a 32-bar AABA structure to be found here. You are entering a sonic universe, but more importantly, a music which reveals itself as most definitely structured and well thought out... Many types of jazz allow you to lose yourself within them, and Quality Anatomical Music Since 2005 most certainly does that, but from quite a different angle. Recommended."

The success of Ergo's debut CD prompted Ergo to be invited to perform at a variety of both jazz music and electronic music festivals. The trio played at the **Williamsburg Jazz Festival** in Brooklyn, NY, and at such well-known electronic festivals as the **Sonic Circuits Festival** in Washington D.C. and at **Risonanze** (2008) in Venice, Italy. In addition, the group continued to play live at various clubs.

[Multitude, Solitude press release continued on verso...]

Cuneiform, a label specializing in genre-defying music including avant jazz, signed Ergo to release its second CD, called **Multitude, Solitude**. Released here. **Multitude, Solitude** features Ergo coming further into its own. Throughout the CD's 6 tracks, the band refines its unique style of unadorned melody and intrepid free improvisation, incorporating a sensual approach to such post-modern sonic techniques as sampling, synthesis and signal processing. Pieces such as "Vessel" and "Actuator" journey from quiet, lonely melody to dense, tumultuous anthems. "Rana Sylvatica", named for a frozen wood frog, features violent waves of instrumental, digital and post-processed textures and suggests transformation. In contrast, both "She Haunts Me" and "Little Shadow" bask in lush, electro-acoustic ambience.

Multitude, Solitude features a lineup of composer/leader **Brett Sroka** on trombone and laptop, **Carl Maguire** on Rhodes electric piano and analog synth, and **Shawn Baltazor** on drums. **Carl Maguire**, a pianist, keyboardist and composer of knotty and oblique music, has also played with **Butch Morris** and **Tyshawn Sorey** and has released two acclaimed CDs with his own band **Floriculture**. **Shawn Baltazor**, an ebullient, eclectic drummer, also plays with **Eric Reed and the Hangmen**, and was recently commissioned to compose music for the **Daniel Gwirtzman Dance Company**.

The title of **Multitude, Solitude** contains references to contemporary culture and media theory. In his excellent, thought-provoking liner notes for the CD, media/technology theorist and philosopher **Barry Vacker** [www.barryvacker.net] asserts that:

Ergo is cool. ...

*We live in a world where the multitude are ever more informed, yet ever further from reality; they are ever more connected, ever less alone, yet ever more lonely, with ever less solitude. Against and within all these conditions, Ergo's **Multitude, Solitude** represents the coolness of media and music. The songs have long, smooth, single notes that are inviting and seductive in their suggestion of subjective solitude...*

...Ergo does something special that goes beyond mere minimalism. ...By combining the ancient with the modern, the trombone with synthesizer, the drum with computer, Ergo also embraces the roots of music, yet is not sentimental or claiming a faux authenticity. Ergo engages the past, yet enters the future.

***Multitude, Solitude** conveys...a world where the multitude may be mostly lost, but solitude and individuality can still be found in the voids of the universe, in the gaps in the information, in the nothingness between the notes."*

Ergo celebrated the release of **Multitude, Solitude** with a performance at the internationally acclaimed 2009 **Sonic Circuits Festival** in Washington DC, one of largest and most prestigious festivals of electronic music in the USA.

For more information, please visit Ergo online at: www.ergoisaband.com & www.myspace.com/ergo

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS



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