



Bio information: **LE REX**

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**FILE UNDER: JAZZ / BRASS BAND**

**The Swiss Avant-Gutbucket Quintet  
Le Rex  
Takes Chicago with *Wild Man***

Location, location, location. In jazz as in real estate, a musician's position in time and space goes a long way toward defining the parameters of a project's possibilities. For the rambunctious avant-gutbucket Swiss quintet **Le Rex**, a recent sojourn through the American South and Midwest centering on **Chicago** provided the creative fuel that turbo-charges the band's thumping third album **Wild Man**, their first release on the American label **Cuneiform Records**.

Featuring alto saxophonist **Benedikt Reising**, trombonist **Andreas Tschopp**, tuba player **Marc Unternährer**, drummer **Rico Baumann**, and the primary composer, tenor saxophonist **Marc Stucki**, the horn-laden quintet has honed a singular sound that embodies the **Art Ensemble of Chicago's** famous dictum "ancient to the future." Encompassing **New Orleans** polyphony and **AACM** exploration, Le Rex's original music is both strikingly familiar and wondrously oblique, a lens that both sharpens and refracts jazz essentials.

"**Louis Armstrong's Hot Five** wasn't a direct influence, but I can see the connection," says Unternährer. "You could say there's an influence from **Stevie Wonder** and other groove music as well. All of this comes together in this band. We don't want to copy American jazz. We're big fans, but we want to make our own European version. We want to show our own roots too."

While its instrumentation sets Le Rex apart, what really distinguishes the protean ensemble is ferocious interplay and hurtling energy. Drummer and presenter **Mike Reed**, a major force on Chicago's improvised music scene for the past two decades, raved about the band after a Chicago performance that preceded the *Wild Man* recording session, declaring Le Rex "one of my new favorite bands. I love **Atomic**, **Jelly**, and **William Parker's Quartet** is great. I think this band might be as great...I want to try to figure out how to get them back here."

*Wild Man* is very much a response to the band's Chicago experience. Le Rex was founded with maximum portability in mind, often performing in unamplified settings. The musicians have made the most of their mobility, turning each recording into a site-specific happening. The band created its 2010 debut album **Le Corse on Corsica**, recording outdoors in various locations around the sun-baked Mediterranean island (sound engineer **Martin Ruch** documented their quick-hit performances using three omnidirectional microphones powered by car battery and pastis). With their impressive 2012 follow up **Ascona** (both albums are on the label **Unit**), Le Rex turned to their homeland for inspiration, recording at about a dozen locations around Switzerland. For their third album, the pull of Chicago was inexorable.

Unternährer has deep, decade-long ties to the Windy City's improv scene, and the band composed most of the *Wild Man* music there. They honed the new material on a US tour, and then returned to Chicago to record the tunes with veteran sound engineer **Griffin Rodriguez**, who has recorded most of the major figures on Chicago's raucous jazz scene.

"It's a natural evolution," Unternährer says. "After the second release, which was recorded in many different locations around **Switzerland**, it made sense to make the third about the United States and Chicago. We've all spent a lot of time listening to American jazz and the AACM movement is really important influence. On this record we let this side of our music come to the foreground."

The album opens with Tschopp's trippy "**Mole's Dream Of The Prairie**," which evokes **Ellington's** jungle music more than the wide-open plains. Stucki's herky jerky "**Home Alone**" paints a vivid picture of dread and melancholy on a small canvas, while Reising's "**The Dwarf**" sprints through a muddy alley in New Orleans, juking to a fierce second line groove.

While Unternährer and Tschopp often hold down the low end, delivering propulsive and booting bass lines, Le Rex isn't married to any particular instrumental roles. The quick-change textures and unpredictable shifts from frontline to rhythm section duties turns each piece into a slippery sonic realm where the usual instrumental roles don't apply. Stucki's "**Mr. Richard Kiel**" attains hurtling moments on Reising's insistent four-note figure, while the interlocking lines of Tschopp's "**Le Clic**" threaten to spin off the tracks.

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The album's title track features an extended slow-burning melody that's stalwart, quietly resolute and increasingly weighty, an example of Le Rex's orchestral palette. The buoyant **"Riff Raff,"** a sing-song melody set in a calypsonian groove, captures Le Rex at its most celebratory, while the sober and judicious **"Sugar Maple"** takes some **Rahsaanian** harmonies for a tour in the countryside. *Wild Man* closes with Stucki's gradual workout **"Be in Shape!"** an ode to the **Shape Shoppe** studio where the band honed the album's arrangements. With Reising's alto wailing over a thick mesh of brass, the piece is an extended crescendo that never quite reaches its climax. In the world of Le Rex, you have to expect the unexpected. With *Wild Man*, the group has immersed itself in the hurly burly of Chicago's improvisational ethos without severing ties to their Swiss roots. It's a tour de force that leaves one wondering where they might head next.

While Le Rex is a major commitment for all five musicians, they are all involved in numerous other (often overlapping) ensembles, projects and institutions. **Marc Stucki**, 37, was born and raised in Berne, Switzerland, and started studying saxophone as a teenager at the **Swiss Jazz School** with **Samuel Zingg**. In 2006 he spent some formative time in New York City taking classes with **Ellery Eskelin** and **Tim Berne**. A sought after collaborator, Stucki plays saxophones and bass clarinet in bands such as **King Pepe**, **Kaos Protokoll**, and **Meta Marie Louise**. A prolific sideman, composer and arranger for various pop, rock and jazz projects, he's also active on the Swiss music scene in a variety of other capacities, from running a small concert venue in Berne, **Sonarraum U64**, and co-founding **Jazzwerkstatt Bern**, to serving on the board of the **Swiss Music Syndicate**, the Swiss union for improvising musicians.

Born on November, 30 1978 in Basel, Switzerland, alto saxophonist **Benedikt Reising** grew up in the tripoint region where France, Switzerland and Germany converge. After his teenage years playing recorder in the local punk scene he discovered the saxophone and began investigating many different musical forms, particularly **Baroque** chamber music and jazz. He studied saxophone and improvisation in Dresden with East German free jazz legend **Friedhelm Schönfeld** and in Berne with saxophonist **Andy Scherrer** and Belgium trumpeter **Bert Joris**. In addition to Le Rex, Reising tours internationally with the bands **Die Pilze**, **Der Wawawa**, **Hildegard Lernt Fliegen**, and **King Pepe**. An in-demand sideman, he's worked with singular artists such as **Elina Duni**, **Colin Vallon**, **Andy Scherrer**, **Josh Berman**, **Keefe Jackson**, **Lucien Dubuis**, **Reinier Baas**, the **Swiss Jazz Orchestra**, and **Lucas Niggli**, just to name a few. As a studio musician he works with the drama and dance companies, and along with Le Rex bandmate **Marc Stucki** is co-founder of the musicians collective **Jazzwerkstatt Bern**.

Born on May 15, 1979 in Zurich, Switzerland, **Andreas Tschopp** started trombone at the age of seven. In 2003 he graduated from the **Hochschule für Musik Basel** with a degree in music pedagogy and jazz trombone. One of Switzerland's most in-demand jazz trombone freelancers, he performs in a diverse array of musical constellations ranging from duo settings to **Bob Brookmeyer's New Art Orchestra**, and the **Zurich**, **Lucerne**, and **Swiss Jazz Orchestras**. In addition to Le Rex, he's a member of the ensembles **Hildegard Lernt Fliegen**, **Kaspar Ewalds Exorbitantes Kabinett**, **Hans Feigenwinter ZINC**, **Vertigo Trombone Quartet**, **Starch**, **Ersatzbrüder**, **Lauer Large**, **Reto Suhner Nonett**, and many other projects. His small band associates include **Nils Wogram**, **Pierre Favre**, **Hans Feigenwinter**, **Rainer Tempel**, **Johannes Lauer**, **Reto Suhner**, **Adi Pflugshaupt**, **Mats Spillmann**, and **Vera Kappeler**. He has played on dozens of records, and is in the midst of several new projects, including a **Swiss/South African** collaboration and an album by his own band **Bubaran** playing jazz influenced by **Indonesian** gamelan music. Tschopp teaches jazz trombone at the **Lucerne University of Arts**.

The senior member of Le Rex, **Marc Unternährer**, 40, lives and works in Lucerne, Switzerland. One of the most active and versatile tubists of his generation, he spent five formative months in Chicago in 2002 on a grant provided by the **Sister Cities Luzern-Chicago**, which laid the foundation of an ongoing collaboration with some of the Chicago scene's greatest improvisers. Unternährer has toured in the US and Europe as a member of the quartet **Chicago Luzern Exchange** (with **Josh Berman**, **Keefe Jackson** and **Frank Rosaly**), which recorded the acclaimed 2005 CD *Several Lights* for the **Delmark** label (it was voted one of the 10 best Chicago jazz records of the year by the *Chicago Reader*). A versatile talent active in many forums, Unternährer has collaborated on several theater productions with the director **Ruedi Häusermann**, played new Swiss folk music with **Albin Brun's NAH Quartet**, accompanied the extraordinary American-Swiss singer **Erika Stucky** and explored improvised music with **Christian Weber**, **Gerry Hemingway**, **Hans-Peter Pfammatter**, **Lucas Niggli**, **Fred Lonberg-Holm**, **Barry Guy's LJCO**, **Urs Leimgruber** and many others. As the co-founder of the **Mullbau**, a room for improvised music in **Luzern**, and a longtime lecturer at the **University Luzern**, he was voted in 2011 by the *Kulturmagazin 041* as one of the main culturally active people in Luzern.

Born 1983 in Berne, Switzerland, drummer **Rico Baumann** grew up in a family of musicians and was exposed to a wide variety of musical styles from an early age. From 2003 to 2007 he studied at the **Swiss Jazz School in Berne** with **Billy Brooks**, **Jan Fabricky** and **Fabian Kuratli**. His musical activities could hardly be more varied. Most recently he has been stirring up the international digital pop press with his R&B-influenced electro-duo **True**. He's as sought after for jazz and improvised music (**Der Wawawa**, **Swiss Jazz Orchestra**, **Weird Beard**, **Luzia von Wyl Ensemble**) as much as he is for hip hop, pop and electronic music (**Baze**, **King Pepe**, **Sarda**, **KG & Morricone**). He's been awarded grants from the **Friedl Wald Trust**, the **Marianne and Curt Dienemann Trust**, and was selected in 2012 to represent Switzerland in the **European Jazz Orchestra**. In 2015 he was granted a six-month artist residency in New York from the city of Berne. His international collaborators include **Don Li**, **Elina Duni**, **Hildegard Lernt Fliegen**, **Colin Vallon**, **Harald Haerter**, **Kaspar Ewalds Exorbitantes Kabinett**, **Electric Blanket**, **Torun Eriksen**, **Bonaparte**, **Stefanie Heinzmann**, **Luzern Jazz Orchestra**, **Peter Scherrer**, **Emma Murray**, **Michael Fehr** and many more.

Together, these five singular musicians have honed a volatile, versatile and entirely appealing sound. The chemistry stems not so much from the historical resonance of their instrumentation, but from deep friendships forged on the road and a shared experimental ethos.

“When we met and decided to play music together it wasn’t put together with a particular concept,” Unternährer says. “We came together as a group of friends, and we’ve gotten really close through so much playing and travel. Le Rex is a group of such individual players, and I know I’ve found my voice by being part of it.”

*For more information on Le Rex:*

[www.lerexmusic.ch](http://www.lerexmusic.ch) – [www.facebook.com/LeRexMusic](http://www.facebook.com/LeRexMusic) – [www.cuneiformrecords.com](http://www.cuneiformrecords.com)

### **PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS**

Digital [High-Resolution] versions of these images are available on the Le Rex artist page @ [www.cuneiformrecords.com](http://www.cuneiformrecords.com)



### **THE LE REX COMPOSERS' TRACK NOTES for WILD MAN**

#### **Mole's Dream Of The Prairie** (Tschopp)

For a mole, prairie must be some place between nirvana and the land of milk and honey. A place every mole ceaselessly dreams of. This song is the soundtrack to these dreams, the sound of infinite wideness and joyful solitude.

#### **Home Alone** (Stucki)

A composition which is inspired by events that happened during a time when I found myself all of a sudden home alone with all the imaginary ghosts around.

#### **The Dwarf** (Reising)

The Dwarf combines the dwarf-hattery of dwarfs living deep in the Swiss mountains with the Second Line groove NOLAs, as heard by European ears. The intention was to make a almost ridiculously hard swinging beat with a red clown's nose still sound cool. Dwarf's hats are worn in Europe especially by garden gnomes, Snowwhite's seven dwarfs and the members of a Südbadische carnival group, which likes to get in fights using blown-up pig's bladders.

#### **Mr. Richard Kiel** (Stucki)

Celebrating the life of actor Mr. Richard Kiel, best known from his role "Jaws" in James Bond movies. Dedicated to the Wild Man who thought about celebrating in the first place: Ross Taylor.

#### **Le Clic** (Tschopp)

Le Clic pays tribute to the old tradition of watchmaking in the French part of Switzerland, to the craft of showing time, the phases of the moon, even the movement of full hemispheres with the aid of tiny little wheels and feathers. In the song, a simple drum click keeps running the clockwork of some monstrous limping groove machine of brass and reeds.

#### **Hymn to the Cold** (Stucki)

This is about the smell you get when it's minus 20 degree celsius cold. It's the music to a glittering winter wonderland about to freeze to stone.

#### **Wild Man** (Reising)

Wild Man was composed in thought of our good friend Ross Taylor from Columbia, SC. A man who grows bitter melons in his garden, cares about colibris, organizes free jazz concerts in the midst of the bible belt, cooks the best pig's feet north of the equator and goes fishing on Tuesdays. That's a man the way the world needs it. We don't need roaring deer who try to mislead about their tameness by driving stretch Hummers, a real Wild Man eats raw garlic for breakfast! This epically thought out melody, cut from one piece, doesn't even make justice to his audacity!

**Riff Raff** (Stucki)

Riff Raff is a venue on Chicago's South Michigan Avenue where I never had the courage to enter. From the outside it looks like a mixture of European techno event and Afro-American rap venue. The song is not inspired by the music that is played inside the venue.

**Sugar Maple** (Stucki)

The Sugar Maple is a jazz venue in Milwaukee. It's the gig the whole band Le Rex is looking forward to on a tour. We learned on the last tour that it is not going to last and the last gig we had there was probably the last we'll ever play there. The song is about the thrill you get when you know that concert is going to be the next on the tour.

**Anchor** (Unternährer)

An anchor can give you a chance to rest and a feel of stability in turmoil of life. But to sail on, it has to be lifted. Musically, "Anchor" refers to the great inspirations from the 70s, especially the Chicago jazz scene.

**Don't Lean on the Case!** (Stucki)

"Don't lean on the case!" is a sentence used by a museum watchman at the Art Institute of Chicago during a exhibition of Belgian artist René Magritte. He used the sentence as a mantra to get people asleep so they would fall on the cases instead of leaning onto them.

**A Walk on South Michigan** (Stucki)

The song evolved during a period of no inspiration, taking long walks on Chicago's South Michigan Avenue.

**Be in Shape!** (Stucki)

The Shape Shoppe is the studio where Le Rex rehearsed all the new compositions on the new album. Most was even composed at Shape Shoppe, particularly this song.