

What the press has said about:

ERGO

MULTITUDE, SOLITUDE

CUNEIFORM

2009

Lineup: *Brett Sroka: trombone, computer; Carl Maguire: Rhodes electric piano, Prophet synthesizer, electronic effects; Shawn Baltazor: drum*

"In his own words trombonist Brett Sroka surrounded himself with synthesizers "to reconcile the six hundred years of technology between the trombone and the computer" and for the most part, this album connects, on a broadband scale.

...each song appears to sound like it each has its own story to tell. ... Each song and the album as a whole has direction, not stuck sounding like an "electrazzic" album..."

- **Brenton Plourde, *Jazz Times***, April 27, 2009, www.jazztimes.com

"...the trio dubbed Ergo represents a new era in music making where chill and improvisation meet headlong in the personal computer-driven age. ...trombonist Brett Sroka and keyboardist Carl Maguire merge separate and distinct identities in creative jazz-oriented music to create urban, rural and atmospheric soundscapes that go to the far side of any discernible influences, including that of Eno, Sun Ra, Autechre, or Curtis Fuller. There's a tuneful quality, consistent drones and spikes that suggest industrialism, retro fusion via Maguire's Fender Rhodes electric piano, and even an underground bop aesthetic fueled by post-art rock and tempered with the romanticism of Sigur Rós. ... you'll hear them go well beyond any strictly defined tones, into completely new horizons similar to nothing you've heard before. ... Ergo has touched on something quite unique and cool in contemporary fusion music with *Multitude, Solitude*, reaching into and past modern creative, ambient music or mere basic electronica. Teamwork...captivating, hypnotic, and attractively exotic music..."

- **Michael G. Nastos, *All Music Guide***, www.allmusic.com

"Pointillist gurgles and clouds of computer haze are made beautiful by boss Brett Sroka's design sense—this trombone, Rhodes, and drums trio has a deft touch when it comes to molding silence and drones into rich celestial balladry. The subtleties of the new *multitude, solitude* are a nifty confluence of George Lewis's dreamscapes and Miles's *Lonely Fire*, and while it's a record that invites you to watch the embers glow..."

- **Jim Macnie, *Village Voice***, March 16, 2010, www.villagevoice.com

"... Ergo are a New York-based trio of trombone, keyboards and drums... They make moody music... Fender Rhodes...and the Prophet synth... remain versatile tone generators...this is no nostalgia trip. The main point of interest is the lead 'bone work, which cuts through the dreaminess of the keys and digital refractions. The trombone treatments are vital to the compositions; this is no mere dub frippery. This disc is best experienced as a suite..."

- **David Dacks, *Exclaim!***, www.exclaim.ca, October 2009

"Ergo's music is also rooted in jazz, however the New York trio's latest 'Multitude, Solitude'...is a more experimental affair, fused with electronica and a distinct avant-garde feel. ...quite beautiful and moving...a bit like Sigur Ros meeting Sun Ra uptown. It's also the sort of sound you might hear coming from Manfred Eicher's ECM stable which is no mean recommendation. It is a tribute to Cuneiform that they continue to nurture bands as interesting and diverse as Ergo, Miriodor and Beat Circus and long may they continue to do so."

- **Ian Fraser, *Terrascope***, April 2010, www.terrascope.co.uk

"...The trio that comprises Ergo...call to mind another idiosyncratic trio...The Necks, but where that estimable triad regale you with a mutable brand of ambient jazz, Ergo opt for a tangible dazzling of the senses. More isn't less here; their panoply of noises sounds like an entire company of artists at work, so outwardly sensate is the entire recording. ...

Sroka's trombone seems to be the sinew holding the whole enterprise together, and he uses it in multiple fashions, both as background coloring and fundamental component. ...haunting environs of "Vessel" is a neat summation (and microcosm) of Ergo's modus operandi: Sroka blows some affecting lead lines around which Baltazor dances... (his flurry of cymbal orthodoxy recalls...Morris Pert and Sun Ra's Francisco Mora) while Maguire paints some subtle kaleidoscopic figures with his numerous keyboards...

...Ergo don't resemble anything remotely traditional... It's apparent they're searching for new contexts and idioms on this...broaching a "fourth-stream"...where abstractionism...is as important in their approach as such hoary absolutes as melody, harmony, and rhythm. ...Ergo...set forth to upset all known jazz apple carts, successfully fomenting new dialogues in the process.

- **Darren Bergstein, *The Squid's Ear***, December 28, 2009, www.squidsear.com

"... Long tracks with ambient grooves, fine textures, a floating sound. ..." - **François Couture, *Monsieur Délire***, November 19, 2009

"This electro-acoustic experimental jazz trio from NYC blend and blur genres via Brett Sroka's trombone and computer, Carl Maguire's Rhodes electric piano, and Shawn Baltazor's drums. The results range from busy complexity to spare atmospheres, pieces that sound like the soundtracks to suspenseful films, or floating dream sequences. ...very rewarding and varied..."

- **George Parsons, *Dream Magazine***, #10

"... Ergo, at its core, seems as unconventional as they get—trombone, keyboards, drums—creating music that wouldn't have been possible before relatively recent innovations in sound processing and sampling/looping. ... For fans of the improvised, electronics-centric music heralded by the Norwegian musicians in the extended Punkt family, *Multitude, Solitude* is a seamlessly organic album of quietude that commands attention from its very first moments.

... This is music that evolves slowly, almost imperceptibly; yet for all its freedom, there's no shortage of structure. Closer in ambience to classical chamber music, the album's two longest pieces are particularly compelling. "Endlessly (multitude, solitude)," with its layers of trombone—in Sroka's hands, truly a vocal instrument—possesses the same paradoxical stasis-meets-forward-motion of Norwegian saxophonist Trygve Seim's outstanding *Sangam*...

Shorter pieces...rely on processing to allow Sroka to build up layers of trombone. ... Hints of Philip Glass, Steve Reich, and Terry Riley imbue Sroka's writing, but never come to the forefront.

... Like Norwegian artists like Arve Henriksen, however, Sroka takes a different approach to composition, one where improvisation and structure work hand-in-hand, each feeding the other. *Multitude, Solitude*'s 50 tranquil minutes ebb and flow with stunning realism in a landscape of otherworldly textures."

- **John Kelman, *All About Jazz***, January 4, 2010, www.allaboutjazz.com

"Keyboardist Carl Maguire... trombonist/computer operator Brett Sroka and drummer Shawn Baltazor spawn an experimental muse, where rigid definitions or categorizations, justifiably fall flat. ...

The band delves into numerous jazz improvisation and subtle electronics-based offshoots via quietly changing themes and floating soundscapes. Baltazor's rumbling drums often serve as a contrapuntal effect during the temperate moments, as he also injects shades and hues with textural cymbal swashes. Sroka's moody lines elicit tension-and-release formats amid laid-back choruses, to complement the unit's generation of subtle dynamics and crashing cadenzas.
...intuition plays a vital role throughout. ...it's an oscillating and persuasive venture...where no hard and fast rules apply.”

- **Glenn Astarita**, *All About Jazz*, January 8, 2010, www.allaboutjazz.com

“This is a trio working the electro-acoustic margins...and whilst Ergo's music often flirts with ambient notions, there is equally a predominant air of unease about their work...

...the overall effect is tantalizing in its indeterminacy.

... "Endlessly (Multitude, Solitude)" makes the point. Here, keyboardist Carl Maguire—the man who's responsible for some of the stimulating releases of recent years with his band Floriculture—generates all kinds of excuses for stasis with near-static, repetitive keyboard figures, even as the music develops a kind of distinctly non-linear flow. The result is almost an uneasy compromise between two arguably irreconcilable notions...the trio is adept at thinking as one. The outcome of the collective ideal is...a seemingly infinite capacity for reflection, even while the music never drifts into the background. ...”

- **Nic Jones**, *All About Jazz*, January 16, 2010

“Trombonist Brett Sroka's dreamy trio makes small, incremental moves sound profound, mixing together some ominous keyboard tinkle, a bit of digitally enhanced brass, and enough textural percussion to keep the whole thing fluid. Rather unique. ...”

- **Jim Macnie**, *Village Voice*, November 9, 2011, www.villagevoice.com