FALL MOUNTAIN

Early Fall
Parachute 009


In recent years the work of young improvising musicians in the United States has not always looked promising. The laudable attempts to develop improvisation outside of its “jazz” roots have suffered largely from lack of direction, and such directions acquired through the influence of European schools of improvisation, specifically Evan Parker and Derek Bailey, have often foundered through misinterpretation of the essence of these players’ arts, and wholesale mimicking of their techniques, without understanding their concern with structure, with feeling, and indeed with their earlier jazz roots.

In the midst of this situation, during 1979 two records appeared by two groups of young, white improvisors, very different from each other in style, but startling not by virtuosity of individual voices but by the strength and clarity of their group identities. One of these records was “Cinema Rovaté” by the Rova Saxophone Quartet and the other was “Early Fall”. While composition is an essential part of the Rova’s repertoire, Fall Mountain, at least on this record, concerns itself with intense, deliberate free improvisation. From one track to the next, the music entails the sensitive, intelligent development of different moods. The contrasting styles and colours of the trio – Rothenberg’s reeds, Ostertag’s electronics and Katzin’s violin – almost always feed and enhance each other, either through contrast (cold electronics versus the blues; pulse versus arhythmic washes of sound and texture) or through a most sympathetic blend, the result of close listening and a common intent. Another area of American improvised music is heard from – it is important that this group continue to play together and develop their already-stimulating art.

— David Lee