

## Willem Breuker Kollektief

At Ruta Maya Café

BVHAAS 0506

★★★½

The Kollektief is incredible at what they do. They'd better be, because they've been doing it for a long time. When the band is least successful, it feels like they may have been doing it too long, doing the same thing for much of that time, treading and retreading the same familiar paths, telling the same musical jokes, and sometimes wearing them out. But on a good night, playing in front of a warm and appreciative crowd, with a guest to throw a wrench into the regularity of it all, they're quite a sensation.

In Austin, Texas, the great music town where one of their American comrades, Alex Coke, relocated some years back, they had one of those nights in March 2005. The core tentet has remained largely intact for a long time, playing music that jumps around from genre to genre and milieu to milieu in a dizzying way. As a composer, Willem Breuker is at home interweaving Romany melodies, sing-song circus music, military marches, classical chamber music and jazz.

One of the highlights on *At Ruta Maya Café* is a version of Gigi Gryce's "Smoke Signal," arranged by pianist Henk de Jonge, and featuring relatively recent Kollektief member



Hermine Deurloo on alto saxophone and long-term drummer Rob Verdurmen. I've not always been so fond of his kit-work; though Verdurmen has the crispness and precision needed to pull off some of the jump-cut high jinks, he sometimes feels stiff and heavy. On this date, he's terrific, and the depth of Verdurmen's relationship with outstanding bassist Arjen Gorter is clear throughout.

There are plenty of kicks. On the old standby "P.T.T.," Coke takes a tenor solo (strange that he's not playing flute anywhere here) that must have made Breuker wish that Coke was still in the band. Breuker's great solo on that track, on the contrary, makes me long to hear him in

another context.

Trumpeter Andy Altenfelder has played the same solo—that's the one, there o "Moonbathed"—so many times he could probably do it in his sleep. But it's nice to hear George Pancras' big, warm approach on "Firebrand," kitschy "My Favorite Things"-ish swinger with interjected chamber horn parts and a rather raw segment of open improvising.

Some of today's funkier genre-bender should get ahold of "Busybody," an exacting mindbender with a heck of a backbeat. Presumably for the comedian Karl Valentin "Requiem For Valentin" spotlights Deurloo on wide-ranging harmonica, with de Jonge stabbing at the piano periodically to an appropriately tragicomic effect.

It's not as fresh or exciting as the Kollektief prime documents—get its incredible *In Hollan* (BVHAAS) first—but this is a lively, engaging CD. It's a pleasure, and for the uninitiated, perhaps a mind-boggling thrill. —John Corbett

**At Ruta Maya Café:** Walking Trouble; Dozing Drunkard Moonbathed; Smoke Signal; The Butler; Indiscretion; Journey To The Wedding; Firebrand; Homesickness; Busybody Requiem For Valentin; P.T.T. (77:34)

**Personnel:** Willem Breuker, soprano, alto saxophone; Maarte van Norden, Alex Coke, tenor saxophone; Hermine Deurloo, alto saxophone, harmonica; Andy Altenfelder, George Pancras trumpet; Bernard Hunnekink, Andy Bruce, trombone; Henk de Jonge, piano; Arjen Gorter, bass; Rob Verdurmen, drums.

» Ordering info: [bvhaast.nl](http://bvhaast.nl)