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**BRUCE LEE GALLANTER REVIEW of the 28th ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL MUSIQUE
ACTUELLE VICTORIAVILLE!**

28th Annual Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville May 17th-20th, 2012

As music venues, records stores, and book stores in cosmopolitan cultural centers like New York City, London, Paris and elsewhere continue to close down, the need for a festival like Victo has grown more important for all of us wishing to witness creative new music from around the globe. I often travel with a half dozen friends from the NY area, but this year there were just three of us in the car - Jason Roth, Len 37 Seigfried and myself. One of the great things about Victo is hanging with annual crew of Don White (Houston, Texas), Gordon & Vida (Ontario), Jim Ivy (Orlando, FL), Igor (Israel & Russia), Reed and Joe M. from Rochester. Our trip up the NY Thruway and through customs ran smoother than anytime we could remember, even though Len forgot his passport, nowadays necessary for crossing over the norther border. Our custom is to go to Montreal the day before, hook up with Don and stop at L'Oblique Records (to see Luc or Michel) before having some dinner and making our way to Victoriaville and settle in at the Victorin Hotel, our home for the week.

On the first day of the Victo Fest, Thursday May 24th, we made our way to the FIMAV office to pick up our tickets, buy used Cds, and hobnob with the staff. I spoke with my old friend Michel Levasseur, the founder of FIMAV, about the upcoming festival and the future of the Victo Fests. Misinterpreting something Michel previously said, a certain blabbermouth - me! - had told others that this fest will end in with the 30th Zdition in two years. Hence, many rumors were flying and the big question that many of my friends had were "what will we do once Victo ends?" since it has become an important annual ritual/gathering for those who still want to be challenged by avant/jazz, progressive or other demanding musics. Michel said that Victo will continue for as long as he can make it happen and his health remains good. There was a big sigh of relief from my Victo buddies. The weather for the entire fest was pretty great and even Summer-like hot at times. This seemed odd for Quebec in May but it felt great to be outside so much in between the concerts. There were a half dozen different interactive art exhibitions in the area near the library behind the office, most of which we checked out earlier in the day before the festival began. Each of the exhibitions was fascinating sonically as well as visually in different ways so we took our time to check out each one. A favorite featured several metallic/tubular structures suspended under an open stage with assorted wires that were plucked or bowed by inter-connected arms and driven by small motors. It sounded as amazing as it looked. All of the installations were free, so many townfolk were also able by to check out these temporary treasures.

There is a persistent rumor, often mentioned by John Zorn, that Victoriaville has no good restaurants. As someone who has attended the fest for more than 25 years, I know that this isn't necessarily true. There just a few relatively good ones, especially Mykonos where many of my friends went every night. Breakfasts at the hotel is not too bad but you can also try Pomme Vert for a decent brunch. For good coffee and snacks, the Shad is where we went in between sets.

The opening concert was Phil Minton & the Feral Choir which took place at the Cinema. Mr. Minton is one of the most extraordinary and bizarre singers alive. He is unafraid to dig deep and let out the most ridiculous vocals sounds that any sane or insane person could imagine. Mr. Minton has performed at Victo on several occasions with Lindsey Cooper, Four Walls and in Five Men Singing with other twisted vocalists like David Moss and Makigami Koichi. For this concert, Phil worked with a workshop of a couple of dozen Quebec-based singers for three days previous to this set. The concert started with the entire group slowly walking down one aisle and making bird-like sounds and whistles as they strolled up to the stage. Minton directed the ensemble and broke them up into smaller sections while there were just three rows running across the stage. Minton would make a sound, an odd gesture or expression and have some five sections of the choir imitate him, one section at a time. When he made a weird sound, they do would do something similar. There were a great deal of hilarious sounds and twisted expressions from the different members of ensemble. The first piece was pretty long and Minton did a great job of directing the different sections to sing and then alter their voices as he layered the different sections into a strong tapestry of crashing waves or related currents. The second piece included Mr.

Minton doing some of his own bizarre vocal sounds and warped words, reminding me of the way Harold Beckett sometimes uses voices without distinct words to evoke certain elements of questionable sanity. The entire set had its own twisted charm and it was a perfect beginning to this increasingly unpredictable experience.

The following set by John Zorn, as well as another Zorn set the next day, were two of this festival's highlights and both featured premiers of music never performed live. Mr. Zorn's 'Nova Express' CD was released in April of 2011. The personnel featured a handful of Zorn's most consistent collaborators: John Medeski on piano, Kenny Wollesen on vibes, Trevor Dunn on contrabass and Joey Baron on drums. Although this is the same instrumentation of the Modern Jazz Quartet, Zorn's quartet was often more exuberant and intense. One of the first pieces had that signature quick, start and stop structure with Zorn directing the energy with a tight leash. Zorn mentioned that this quartet featured the great Kenny Wollesen on vibes, an instrument that Kenny has been working with more and more over the past few years. The vibes were the central voice of this fantastic quartet. Kenny took a handful of lush, expressive vibes solos that show him to be a master of the instrument. There were also some equally superb piano solos from John Medeski, more often known for his organ playing. Both Trevor Dunn and Joey Baron were on the top of their game, I can't recall either playing any better than they did for this set. Joey, who is many folks favorite drummer, took one solo that left many of us all astonished. Nobody plays like quite like Mr. Baron! 'Nova Express' is a book title by William Burroughs, who also is the inspiration for the CD of the same name. There was one piece called, "The Lost Words of Dutch Schultz" which had a superb, bluesy, sly groove piano solo from Mr. Medeski. This set took place on the largest stage at the fest, the bigger stage at the Colloseum (A) and it was packed with Zorn fans. They encored with a piece from a William Blake project which was most elegant.

One of the most anticipated sets of this festival was the Mary Halvorson Quintet. They had a new CD just released (on Firehouse12) and have been garnering much attention over the past few years. Besides collaborating with Anthony Braxton, Tim Berne, Tom Rainey and Weasel Walter, Mary Halvorson leads a handful of her own projects, each one worthy of the attention she consistently deserves. Mary's own bands keep evolving and enlarging from duos to trios to her current quintet to a future septet or octet project. The personnel for this set featured a young all-star Downtown crew with Jon Irabagon on alto sax, Jonathan Finlayson on trumpet, Mary on guitar & compositions, Stephan Crump on acoustic bass and Ches Smith on drums. This quintet is especially well-chosen and shows Ms. Halvorson at her best, both playing -wise and writing/arranging as well. This music is filled with surprising twists and turns and featured amazing solos from Mr. Irabagon (Mostly Other People Do the Killing & a prestigious Monk award), Mr. Finlayson (Steve Coleman's current band), Ches Smith (Tim Berne & Marc Ribot) and Mary herself. You had to listen closely to hear the way arrangements unfolded and challenged each member of the quintet. There was a number of odd combinations of players matching wits and interacting on several levels at the same time. Mary took a handful of guitar solos which completely blew my mind since she doesn't sound like anyone else in the history of jazz and draws from a wealth of influences like psych, folk, rock, third stream and assorted streams too difficult to describe. The word "progressive" gets tossed around too often nowadays but it doesn't begin to describe how much of an infinite umbrella it covers. This music is completely progressive on its own terms and filled with a variety of complex ideas and strategies. If you haven't heard Ms. Halvorson's new disc ('Bending Bridges'), I urge you to get it and give it a number of listens before you decide who is the next new voice on guitar.

Day Two began at 1pm with the Maikotron Unit from Quebec whose personnel included Michel Cote on bass clarinet, saxes & homemade reed things, Pierre Cote on contrabass & cello and Michel Lambert on drums & Maikotron (other homemade brass & reed oddities) plus their guest Stephen Haynes on trumpet, cornet & bugle. Although I had heard of this ensemble before, I had no clue they had so many discs out (nine?) on their own label. I know of Michel Cote from numerous discs on Ambiances Magnetiques, as well as his brother Pierre from his work with Francois Carrier. Michel Lambert has also worked with Francois Carrier as well as with Raoul Bjorkenheim, Paul Bley and Bob Moses. The set-up for this quartet was visually striking as each member played an assortment of odd instruments. There were a few mutant-looking hand-made reed & brass instruments that looked like they were from another planet. Most of the solos of the hybrid instruments were bizarre sounding and hard to describe. Much of this set was pretty restrained with each piece started by a different musician. The hybrid horns included two contrabass clarinet-like instruments with odd mutes that were on a hinge and a string to pull to open & close. There was also an over-sized tuba-like instrument which was too big to hold played by the drummer. It took some patience to listen to the slow moving, often quieter side of their explorations. It was good idea to have this quartet start off day 2 although it took some getting use to the more subtle side of their explorations. I felt that Stephen Haynes (a longtime Bill Dixon collaborator) was a perfect match for the rest of the quartet. Like moving cautiously in slow motion.

A Spanish Donkey is a medieval torture device as well as a power trio featuring Joe Morris on guitar, Jamie Saft on electric piano, organ & synth and Mike Pride on drums. Anyone who has heard their CD on Northern Spy realizes that Spanish Donkey are not a jazz trio but an intense rock/jazz/noise power trio. What is interesting is that in this trio out/jazz guitar great Joe Morris plays a Les Paul and whips out streams of dark notes and intense lines. Spanish Donkey is not about soloing but creating a disturbing group sound that is tight, turbulent and often riveting. On the first long piece, Mr. Morris unleashed layers of lines almost nonstop that were occasionally drowned out by the pounding drums and/or swirling electric keyboards. One of the problems of this set as well as a few other sets was the unnecessary use of a smoke machine which created a big rock spectacle ambience and caused some unfortunate coughing from a few audience members. I dug the overall vibe of this set although parts were a bit bombastic and reminded me of seeing Deep Purple play in the early seventies when I was still a fan of their heavy pseudo-prog sound.

The following set again featured a slightly larger John Zorn ensemble and was called, "The Concealed".

This was a new sextet which featured Mark Feldman on violin, Erik Friedlander on cello, John Medeski on piano, Trevor Dunn on bass, Kenny Wollesen on vibes and Joey Baron on drums, with Mr. Zorn directing. For this set Zorn had artist David Chaim Smith choose artwork and text from ancient Jewish scrolls and had them projected on the screen above the sextet. The music was very similar to Zorn's Masada Book of Angels Two. For this set, Mr. Zorn selected an incredible ensemble of some of his favorite collaborators which had never played in this exact formation before. The projected text of philosophical Jewish texts often left us with food for thought. Some of the pieces features subgroups like the Masada String Trio (with Trevor Dunn subbing for Greg Cohen) or just a quartet or trio with Medeski, and/or Wollesen, Dunn and Baron. The music was some of the most lovely, creative and astonishing that we've heard from Mr. Zorn. Anyone who has heard Masada String Trio live, knows that they are always incredible and this version was as good as it gets. I've never heard the immensely talented and diverse Trevor Dunn play any better than he did here and his bass solo as absolutely flabberghasting! Every member of the sextet or trio/quartet got a chance to shine and showed how Mr. Zorn has surrounded himself with a consistently excellent cast of players. Outside of the monthly improv benefits at The Stone, Zorn nowadays rarely plays elsewhere in New York. So checking a chance to hear Zorn's finest collaborators play this new music was indeed a treat for all in attendance. No one will forget this set anytime soon.

From a different perspective, the next set also featured three strings but was completely different. The last set of Day 2 featured a quartet led by Jean Rene on viola with Joshua Zubot on violin, Nicolas Caloia on acoustic bass and Pierre Tanguay on drums. The sound of this ensemble was like a twisted string quartet with the drums as an equal part. Whereas Zorn's string players were articulate and tight, this quartet had a looser earthiness, which was wild and chaotic at times. The quartet blended partially written material with frenzied sections and sparse moments as well. Mr. Rene's writing seemed to draw from folk/rock as well as the odd classical influence. Sometimes all three strings buzzed together intensely while longtime AM drummer Pierre Tanguay balanced both rhythmic and subtle melodic counterpoint. What was surprising about this set was that you never knew what direction was coming next. Both Josh Zubot on violin and Jean Rene on viola took a number of inspired solos while the group interplay that was filled with many odd twists and turns. This was music that will take some time to get used to so it is probably a good idea to get Mr. Rene's disc on AM and dig in deeper.

The third day started with the Miles Perkin Quartet which included Benoit Delbeq on piano, Tom Arthurs on trumpet & flugelhorn, Mr. Perkin on contrabass & compositions and Thom Gossage on drums. The only musician that I was familiar with was Mr. Delbeq who has worked with Francois Houle and has several discs out on the Songlines label. Considering that this was the first set of the day, it was pretty restrained and took some time to calm down into the more subtle state. The music was very chamber-like, with celeste-like piano, strong, thoughtful bowed bass and sparse percussion. Brassman Thom Gossage took a handful of superb, austere Kenny Wheeler-like solos that were the highlights of the set. For one piece, the drummer played hushed bowed cymbals while Mr. Delbeq tapped inside the piano gracefully and Miles plucked his bass strings with a pencil-like rod placed between the strings. At times it sounded like Delbeq had a small jewelry box chiming inside the piano while the other members of the quartet added soft nuances or shades to the well-crafted music as it unfolded. A few folks told me that this was their favorite set at the festival. It certainly was sublime.

Ensemble SuperMusique is/are an Ambiances Magnetiques all-star ensemble with ten members for this set, which featured longtime AM players like Jean Derome, Joan Hetu, Michael Cote, Danielle Roger and Martin Tetreault plus some young musicians like Alexandre St-Onge (el. bass) and Guido De Fabro (violin). The musicians sat in a semi-circle so that they could see each other and the music seemed as if it were directed by certain improv guidelines. The instrumentation included two reeds (Derome & Hetu, also on voice, two percussionists (Roger & Cote), cello, violin, electric keyboards or synth and turntables. Considering that there were ten musicians on stage, the music was often sparse yet focused. Much of the set reminded me of John Zorn's early game pieces (which are also directed improv without someone directing up front), although the overall vibe was slower and more cautious. Ms. Hetu did some odd vocal sounds which always fit well within the framework on the piece. Since nothing was explained, there were a series of incidents that took place which we had to interpret for ourselves. Each musician took a turn sitting in the middle of the stage and drawing or putting info into a laptop which directed the next part of the piece. I especially like the way each percussionists added something distinctly different to the direction of the set. There was also a fine sax duo with two founding members of the AM label, Joan Hetu and Jean Derome, which was both charming and quirky. I spoke with a few audience members who were confused as to what was going on on-stage so it did take some effort to figure out how things worked. Fractured fairy tales, indeed.

Considering that I've been attending the Victo Fest for the past 25 years and I went out with woman from Victoriaville for seven years, I really should have learned more French by now. Sadly, this is not the case. Since practically all of the stage announcements were in French, I was at a loss at times to understand certain remarks made by Michel Levasseur as well as the occasional lyrics that were in French. Most of the time it didn't matter, since there was a minimum of singing at this fest. The next set was one that I felt on the outside of due to the language barrier. It featured a trio with Lucien Francoeur (vocals), Vromb (synth) and Michel Meunier (guitar). Mr. Francoeur was/is a famous lead singer for the Quebecois rock band Aut'chose. While Vromb (a/k/a Hugo Girard) played Tangerine Dream-like synth sounds, Mr. Meunier (who I know from his long-term employ at L'Oblique Records in Montreal) played a variety of rock or noise electric guitar leads. Francoeur did a fine job of spoken word rants that fit well with the spacey sounds of the synth and guitar. Unfortunately for me, 95% of his words were in French so I knew not what he has ranting about other than a couple of English words (like "Woman is the Nigger of the World" by John Lennon). I felt the voice and music worked together very well but my universal translator was off-line. Parts of the set reminded me of Suicide but not as dark as they can get.

After another fine dinner at Mykonos, we made our way to the Cinema to catch Blixt, an amazing power trio featuring Raoul Bjorkenheim on guitar, Bill Laswell on bass and Morgen Agren on drums. Their CD on Cuneiform is incredible and this was one of the most anticipated sets of the year. Blixt had only played twice before and both times in NYC. There were rumors that Mr. Laswell wasn't going to appear but I didn't want to mention this to anyone since no one knew if he was going to show or not. Everyone in attendance thought that Laswell was going to be there before the set began. Mr. Levasseur gave a long stage announcement in French which confused the situation even more to the many English-speaking members of the audience. At the end of his talk, Michel said that there would be a surprise solo set from Henry Grimes to start off this particular concert. Hmmmmm. So Henry Grimes came out and played a borrowed acoustic bass and violin. His set was about thirty minutes and it was splendid. Mr. Grimes is a fine bassist and violinist and hadn't played at Victo very often so it was great to hear him although many in the audience were confused by the turn of events.

Many folks wondered why Mr. Laswell had decided not to play, especially after initially agreeing to do so. Word is that Mr. Laswell felt dissed by the placement Blixt in the bottom half of a list that appeared in the Wire magazine. At a press conference the next day, Mr. Levasseur dispelled rumors that Laswell missed the gig due to health problems, which had occurred just a couple of years back in NY. So, the duo of Raoul Bjorkenheim and Morgan Agren hit the stage and still kicked some butt! They had rehearsed as a duo and did more than just improvise. Their playing was extremely tight, focused and powerful. Morgan has a massive, double-bass drums set which he used to its full advantage. I hadn't seen or heard a drummer that played in the later-fusion style since the grand old days of Mahavishnu Orchestra or the Mothers circa the early seventies. Raoul seemed like a mischievous child as he stalked the stage setting up lines and grooves and taking a number of explosive guitar solos. Raoul occasionally dips into his Hendrix bag and pulls out some sounds or lines that evoke the great spirit of Jimi at his best. The set turned out to be pretty intense and spirited nonetheless. Earlier in the week, Blixt with Laswell did play at The Stone which I missed while attending this fest. Oh well, you can't be in two places at once.

The previous day, I attended a press conference by Wadada Leo Smith. Wadada had a new 4 CD set just released on Cuneiform called 'Ten Freedom Summers'. According to Leo, he had a vision when he was 12 and decided that he wanted to do something about racial inequality in the US. Hence, he has been writing and saving pieces with themes about this for more than thirty years. This box-set is the culmination of his work and it is four & a half hours long with a double ensemble, his regular Golden Quintet plus a chamber ensemble. When asked how he dealt with all of the pain and suffering that black people have had to deal with for many years, while composing this work, Wadada left us with this: when all of the kings and empires have turned to dust, the one thing that survives is Art, so strive to be an artist.

The Golden Quintet here featured Wadada Leo Smith on trumpet, composition & direction, Anthony Davis on piano, John Lindberg on contrabass and Susie Ibarra and Pheeroan AkLaff on drums. There were also images taken from the history of racial strife projected on the big screen above the musicians. The Golden Quartet has evolved over the past decade with assorted personnel changes. The current version works as a solid well-seasoned force. Considering that Wadada is 70, with dozens of excellent records under his belt, his playing remains consistently creative, spirited and singular. He does sound like Miles Davis at times but still has his own distinctive voice. His playing is often at the center of this music, like an ancient voice that has lived many lives and has many stories to tell. All five members of the quintet got their chance to stretch out and solo at length and each member was extraordinary in his or her own way. Once of my friends asked me why Wadada needed two drummers. Simple, both have completely different approaches and both sound great together and apart. Each one took a solo which showed how well they evoke separate visions. The projections were often more subtle with images of Martin Luther King, Malcom X and the civil rights marches of the sixties. Some images were more abstract and only hinted at a meaning so that we were able to interpret them in our own way. Without any lyrics or vocals, it was the music alone that swept us away. This set reminded me of the way a perfect jazz set is a matter of balance, timing and well-integrated personalities. I look forward to concentrating on all four discs of the box-set since there is so much great music there to absorb and consider. When the set was finished, Wadada left us with this: our planet has been taken over by dark forces, it is time to reclaim the planet and bring some positive energy to everyone.

The final set that night was by a mysterious fellow named Copernicus. It was a complete solo performance with some pre-recorded music by Pierce Turner. The last time I caught Copernicus was more than twenty-five years ago at the Cat Club in NYC and no one seemed to know where he has been since. The mostly progressive Moonjune label reissued five of his previous CDs and a DVD over the past few years. Copernicus sat in chair center stage or walked around with a wraparound mic attached. He spoke defiantly in proclamations much like one would expect from a prophet or a crazy person. He often spoke in terms that only a language expert or scientist (biophysics?) could understand. Many of were not sure how to respond to his ridiculous rants. Is this some sort of joke? Or are we the "blind zombies of ignorance" that Copernicus mentioned several times throughout his set? I found the set to be entertaining although I wasn't sure how to respond to his often confounding words.

Sunday, May 20th was the final day of the fest and it began at the Cinema with Esmerine from Quebec. This was a unique quartet with cello, 2 large marimbas, piano and trombone or small guitar with some compelling projected images. Cellist Rebecca Foon was often the main soloist and shined in that role. The music had an organic folk/rock sort of charm and reminded me of the Penguin Cafe Orchestra at times. I dug the way both large marimbas were used, sometimes being bowed and sometimes playing interlocked grooves. Ms. Clea Minaker worked on the side of the stage producing her images so we could see how she did this. The earthy pastels, leaves and small branches always fit with the music that was played. I found the entire set immensely charming on different levels. Time to get their CD and listen closer.

Matana Roberts is a restless, world-traveling saxist and composer who has been based in NY for the past decade. Matana performs solo, has a Chicago trio, a quartet in London, as well as this tentet from the Montreal area. Matana is driven by forces inside and outside and has been working on a project called Coin Coin which has evolved through various stages. From solo sets to her ten-piece, Coin Coin, continues to evolve. This tentet has a great disc out on Constellation from 2011 although the concert showed how this piece is still developing. Besides Matana on alto sax & vocals, the other instruments included tenor & bari saxes, trumpet, guitar, piano, violin, bowed saw and vocals and/or narration by Ms. Gitanjali Jain. There were also projected images of Matana's ancestors which seemed to fit with the music perfectly. Both vocalists (Matana & Gitanjali) were on either end of a semicircle and had separate yet connected dialogue going on often simultaneously. At one point both women were screaming together with some disturbing images flickering on the screen above. Each section of the piece featured one or two musicians soloing while the rest of the ensemble provided a connected cushion underneath. There were a number of inspired solos which emerged like some effective noise guitar from Ms. Sarah Dion and an outstanding violin solo from Josh Zubot. What made this piece so special was the way Matana put together a tight tapestry of songs, some gospel-like, some bluesy, an earthy acappella section which evoked an auction block selling of slaves. Matana stirred a great deal of emotions in all who attended this set. I felt both ashamed of the bloody history of slavery in the US and proud of the way we are able to look closely at what has happened and rise above, breaking free of the chains that have bound us for too long. For many folks who attended this fest, myself included, this was the best set of Victo 2012.

It was difficult to leave behind all of the feelings and emotions that Matana Roberts Tentet evoked in us, so checking out the next set, I was at a disadvantage. The set featured the duo of Sylvain Pohu and Pierre Alexandre Tremblay. Both men played electric guitars with manipulations and/or electronic sounds as well. Pieces would start with soft static and build from there. At times, the guitars had some Fripp-like tones yet were slowly be mutated in different ways. There were sections of this set which I felt were pretty strong although I was somewhat distracted by things that were on my mind and hard to forget.

The next set was another Quebecois quartet with discs on the Constellation label called Thee Silver Mt. Zion Memorial Orchestra. The instrumentation included guitar, two violins, electric or acoustic bass and drums. Their music was closer to some seventies rock some folk-like influences. In some ways, I was reminded of Neil Young & Crazy Horse, especially the way both violins buzzed hypnotic waves in unison. The lead singer and guitarist, Efrim Menuck, had an odd nasal effected voice and often stuck his tongue out while singing. Strange?! I had mixed feelings about this set, although I did enjoy it in a way that I can't explain. Perhaps I need to listen to one of their discs a few times to see if it does get better with time.

The final set of Victo 2012 was the all-star AACM trio of Muhal Richard Abrams on piano, Roscoe Mitchell on soprano & sopranino saxes & wooden flute and George Lewis on trombone and laptop. Both Mr. Abrams and Mr. Mitchell are senior members of the AACM (founded by Abrams in the mid-1960's) while George Lewis (currently a professor at Columbia University) wrote a thick book on the AACM just a couple of years ago. All three of these men are master musicians and composers with Mr. Mitchell also being a founding member of the Art Ensemble of Chicago. It seemed obvious to me that even when improvising, these three think in terms of composition, hence everything seems to be connected. Mr. Abrams was in especially fine form as he played layers of lines, waves upon waves at the piano, thematically developing ideas as he played. Starting slowly and softly, Roscoe cut loose with swirling notes from his soprano or sopranino sax, occasionally playing his wooden flute to a haunting effect. George Lewis is an amazing trombonist who was able to cut loose more than usual and played a number spirited solos. Mr. Lewis used his laptop to sample Muhal's piano or Roscoe's saxes, slowly manipulating one or the other or both at times. This was improvised music at its highest level and the entire set was outstanding throughout. In many ways, it was a perfect way to bring this festival to a grand close.

The Victoriaville Festival has a way of providing hope to those of us who need challenging music to help get through these difficult times. It is like a large family reunion of folks who share a certain exploratory spirit. I noticed that everyone I spoke with felt like a part of a connected spirit, happy to be sharing this spirit of adventure with their fellow travelers, no matter where they are from, whether they agree with your opinion of a particular set or not. Once again, I want to say thanks to Michel Levasseur and his dedicated staff for all of the hard work they put into making this festival so successful. Even when speaking mostly French from the stage, Michel still embodies a more positive view that permeates the entire fest. We need FIMAV to continue so that we have something to look forward to every year, meeting with our international family again and again.

- Bruce Lee Gallanter, Downtown Music Gallery - 5/30/12

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