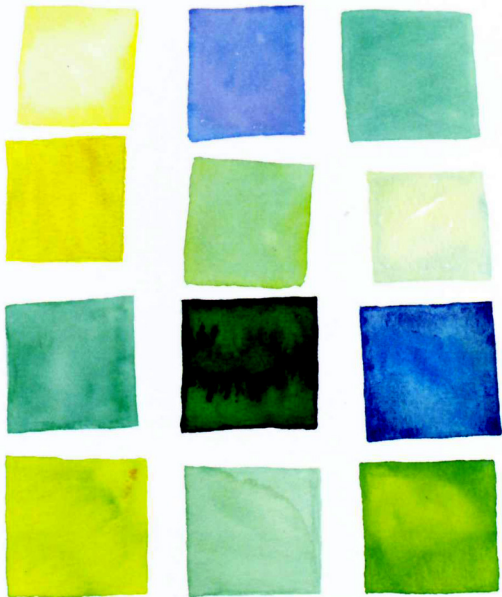


THE OCTOBER TRIO + BRAD TURNER

LOOKS LIKE IT'S GOING TO SNOW



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Notes by Greg Buium

Looks like it's going to snow, the third recording from Vancouver's October Trio, feels like a declaration of principles – something smart and neatly designed, a latticework of images and ideas that will live in your mind's ear for a very long time. But to some, it's an introduction: to three young Canadians, who've started out on the West Coast and are gradually shifting their attention outward.

So far, tenor saxophonist Evan Arntzen, bassist Josh Cole and drummer Dan Gaucher have stuck close to home. Their first two discs – *Live at Rime* (Independent, 2005) and *Day In* (Cellar Live, 2006) – were largely domestic releases, and they've rarely performed outside Western Canada and the Pacific Northwest. But now, in their fourth year together, the October Trio joins Songlines with a set of new original music and a special guest – Vancouver trumpeter Brad Turner, one of the cornerstone figures in Canadian jazz.

If Turner is only now mid-career (he's 41), the October Trio contains some of the finest next-generation voices on Vancouver's small, but widely admired, jazz and creative-music scene. Arntzen and Cole, who grew up here, are 24. Gaucher, a transplanted Albertan, is 30. *Looks like it's going to snow* is the first fully realized example of their work on disc.

The trio's back story isn't unusual. They met at a North Vancouver community college, Capilano, and began playing together in September 2004. The musical bond was immediate, and their first gig came the following month – hence, the nod to October. Percipient listeners,

however, might have taken the group's handle as another kind of declaration – a tip of the cap to Bill Dixon's 1964 *October Revolution in Jazz* (in New York) or the BIMhuis's *October Meetings* (in Amsterdam) more than two decades later. But don't be misled, even within a Vancouver context, where experimental (and especially Dutch) connections mean a great deal. Neither allusion counts; their name isn't a proclamation for the music's outer fringe. It's all about the moods and colours of a Vancouver autumn – deep reds and darkening days, sweet, sharp winds and quiet, hazy rains. If there's something cinematic to *Looks like it's going to snow*, it begins here.

The group's influences are another useful starting point – from, say, *Vespertine*-era Bjork to the Wayne Shorter Quartet. And they've soaked up their older, local peers, too: cellist Peggy Lee's band, guitarist Ron Samworth's different projects (see Songlines 1533-2) or Brad Turner's long-running quartet. Indeed, when the trio began thinking about adding a second horn, Turner seemed a natural fit. They had admired him for years (Turner produced *Day In*) and knew his quartet well: its approach to freedom and form, rhythm and line, how it tugged jazz's mainstream into more adventuresome corners.

So in late 2006, Cole, the trio's primary composer, began to write with Turner in mind. "The Progress Suite," a three-part, 17-minute piece, came first. And very soon, the October Trio + 1 began to work. Dates were plotted out in clusters. Their initial string came during a week in March 2007: two rehearsals, then two gigs, first at a musician-run loft, 1067, then at the city's sole jazz club, the Cellar. That fall they played Seattle's Earshot festival.

By the time *Looks like it's going to snow* was recorded, in June 2008, the sometime four-piece had been playing together for more than a year. Perhaps that's why the disc feels like a culmination and a celebration: a forever set-list crafted on the bandstand and then in the studio. There are six Cole compositions, one from Gaucher and three improvisations in-between. And there are plenty of extramusical storylines, too. Gaucher wrote "Springs" (a.k.a. Alberta's

Banff hot springs) just before the date, while the trio attended Dave Douglas's International Workshop in Jazz and Creative Music. Cole, for his part, cites an impressive range of references – be it a character in Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities* (Sydney Carton in "Give"), an aborted attempt to mimic Jason Moran's Bandwagon ("You're Trying too Hard") or a spiritual journey spurred by C.S. Lewis ("The Progress Suite").

To my mind, however, the primary narrative is the October Trio's unwavering attention to detail. Unlike *Day In*, where movement and drama were, to a great degree, scripted, everything on *Snow* acts as an invitation to open things up – sonic and emotional space, an unburdened framework for improvisation. Together, Cole and Gaucher form a terrific, shifting core – the bassist's earthy tone, the drummer's quick-time empathy. While Arntzen and Turner are a revelation; their interplay is glorious throwback art, where meticulous contrapuntal improvisations soar. Arntzen's New Orleans instincts (he plays clarinet in a number of classic jazz ensembles) melt into marvellous modernist figures and Turner, in turn, thrives. If the trumpeter's previous Songlines appearances are among his strongest on disc – pianist Chris Gestrin's exquisite soundscape, *Stillpoint* (2002), drummer Dylan van der Schyff's international assembly, *The Definition of a Toy* (2005), and saxophonist Michael Blake's Vancouver sextet, *Amor de Cosmos* (2007) – his performance here ranks right up alongside them.

But after an upcoming Canadian tour, Turner will step aside. For now, the October Trio looks ahead with, and without, a second horn. Gaucher recently moved to Toronto so get-togethers will be shorter, more intense – whether they're in Vancouver or further afield. It will be fascinating to follow them into the future: to see how this first plus-one project shapes their promising careers.

Vancouver, BC
November 2008



All compositions by Josh Cole (SOCAN), except 3 by Dan Gaucher (SOCAN), 4 & 8 by Arntzen/Cole/Gaucher/Turner (SOCAN), 6 by Arntzen/Cole/Gaucher (SOCAN).

Produced by Brad Turner. Executive Producer: Tony Reif. Recorded June 18-19, 2008 and mixed September 12-13, 2008 by John Raham at Ogre Studios, Vancouver BC. Mastered by Graemme Brown at Zen Mastering, Vancouver. Artwork by Natalie Sorenson. Photo by Andrew Hudyma. Design by Borzleched.

Management: www.dkam.ca. Bookings: theoctobertrio@gmail.com

Deepest thanks to our families, Brad Turner, everyone at the Coastal Jazz and Blues Society, everyone involved in the 2008 Banff Jazz and Creative Music Workshop, John Raham, and Tony Reif.

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1. YOU'RE TRYING TOO HARD 6:06
 2. FOUND 5:58
 3. SPRINGS 6:06
 4. FLIP 0:49
 5. GIVE (SYDNEY CARTON) 8:16
 6. STUTTER STEP 1:42
 7. LOOKS LIKE IT'S GOING TO SNOW 8:03
 8. BIRD COLONY 3:06
 9. THE PROGRESS SUITE 16:37

"IF YOU ARE ON THE WRONG ROAD, PROGRESS MEANS DOING AN ABOUT-TURN AND WALKING BACK TO THE RIGHT ROAD; AND IN THAT CASE THE MAN WHO TURNS BACK SOONEST IS THE MOST PROGRESSIVE MAN." — C.S. LEWIS

A. PATH

B. TURN BACK

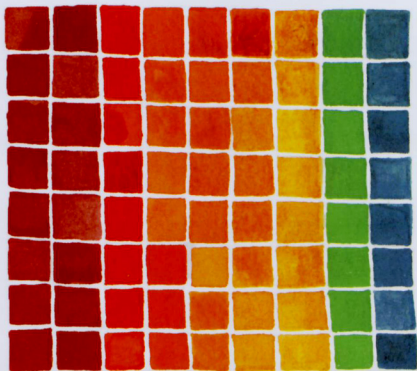
C. LET IT GO, IT WAS NEVER YOURS TO BEGIN WITH

10. WAIT 3:51
-

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EVAN ARNTZEN, TENOR SAXOPHONE BRAD TURNER, TRUMPET & FLUGELHORN

JOSH COLE, ACOUSTIC BASS DAN GAUCHER, DRUMS



1. YOU'RE TRYING TOO HARD 6:06 2. FOUND 5:58 3. SPRINGS 6:06 4. FLIP 0:49 5. GIVE (SYDNEY CARTON) 8:16 6. STUTTER STEP 1:42
7. LOOKS LIKE IT'S GOING TO SNOW 3:03 8. BIRD COLONY 3:06 9. THE PROGRESS SUITE 16:37 10. WAIT 3:51 TOTAL TIME: 60:35

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