

*Bridges*  
TIN/BAG (Mabnotes)  
by Clifford Allen

It wouldn't be wrong or unfair to call the music of TIN/BAG, the duo of LA trumpeter Kris Tiner and Brooklyn guitarist Mike Baggetta, a post-rock pairing. On *Bridges*, their third disc together, the mood of melodic abstraction stretches further away from jazz and improvised composition, in the semi-traditional sense, into areas of atmosphere with a decidedly 'pop' sensibility. Tiner's compositions make up six of the nine tunes here, the title track and "The Truth" are Baggetta's subtle contributions and the disc closes with a cover of Bob Dylan's "Just Like a Woman".

Baggetta's guitar work is often stripped-down and ultra-muted, having a tendency to approach a kind of dusty, filmic minimalism, which presents an interesting contrast with the stately, poised cadenzas of Tiner's brass. The opening "Bobo" presents flurries at first, moving into plaintive footfalls as Baggetta picks out a spacious, hushed rhythm that offers curious support to the trumpeter's direct, gauzily particulate phrases. Occasionally, the guitar rhythms give rise to spiky, air-clearing passages that augment Tiner's steeliness. The pair move through space with sound, taking time to ensure that notes and progressions are absolutely felt even if the music is equal parts pictorial (or imagist) in its reach. "Maslow" is slightly busier with Tiner's gulps, whines and flutters both soft and with a biting tone while Baggetta's gentle reverb caresses and frames the trumpeter's agitation.

The title track begins with Baggetta solo, almost tenor guitar-like in tonal quality. Tiner, upon entering in muted wafts, channels Wadada Leo Smith with incisive softness. "The Truth" reprises the opener's folksy qualities, dewy strums floating almost loop-like with trumpet approaching mildly harried intensity. It's fitting that the pair close with Dylan, embracing a homespun melodicism and wistful romance, but this cover is unnecessary by the same token - TIN/BAG do that quite well on their own.

For more information, visit [mikebaggetta.com](http://mikebaggetta.com). This group is at Brooklyn Conservatory of Music Jul. 21st. See Calendar.



*Vents* Agustí Fernández/John Saura (psi)  
*Ambrosia* Joe Morris/Agustí Fernández (Riti)  
*Morning Glory* (+ Live in New York)  
Agustí Fernández/Barry Guy/Ramón López (Maya)  
*Kopros Lithos*  
Peter Evans/Agustí Fernández/Mats Gustafsson  
(Multikulti Project)  
by Ken Waxman

Over the past 15 years Catalan pianist Agustí

Fernández has become the most celebrated pianist - if not complete improviser - from his part of the world. In many ways he's the successor to pianist Tete Montoliu (1933-97). But while Montoliu was a bopper, Fernández doesn't limit himself to one style, as this quartet of memorable discs makes evident.

As founders of the Improvisadors de Barcelona Orchestra, Fernández has often worked with live electronics and sampler player Joan Saura. *Vents* is a rare duo session from the two. Created in studio over an eight-month period, *Vents'* tracks are so much a part of the electro-acoustic world that it's difficult to remember that Fernández is playing acoustic piano. Then again the keyboardist is a master of the timbres that can be bowed, plucked and strummed from internal strings, usually prepared with vibrating objects and his expressions mate perfectly with the austere flanges and oscillations shrilled, reverberated or crunched by Saura's electric implements. Throughout the performances onomatopoeically reflect both meanings of 'vent': an expression of pent-up emotion and an opening for the escape of gas to release pressure. Most of the tracks are remarkable in the way that Fernández' tough keyboard pressure and popping internal strings add a needed humanity to Saura's radiator-like hisses, motor-driven grinding and crackling sound patches.

*Ambrosia* is not your parents' guitar-piano duo. It put a post-modern cast on the proceedings as Fernández matches wits with guitarist Joe Morris. The latter, who now often works as a bassist, at times manages to translate the low timbre of the four-string to his six-string. That means that echoes of double bass accompaniment is present while the guitarist showcases spiky, single-string action. On a tune such as "Ambrosia 1", the two languidly complement one another even while distending the theme. Morris' fraills speed up to the point that they're eventually bouncing from strings below the bridge and on the neck while Fernández concentrates on swirling and contrasting dynamics à la Cecil Taylor. Even though legato passages and harmonies are at a minimum, some of the tracks on this magisterial six-part suite don't turn away from unintentional delicacy. However, if some tracks come across as a discordant aural version of greyhound racing, with Fernández chord-spraying as quickly as Morris string snaps, the two are still able to intermingle such tactics as soundboard echoes from the pianist and slurred fingering from the guitarist to promote sophisticated parallel improvising.

*Morning Glory* is wedded to acoustic expression. Recorded in Spain and New York, this two-CD set is a spiky take on the jazz piano trio with British bassist Barry Guy and Spanish percussionist Ramón López. The album's 19 tracks, especially those recorded live at Jazz Standard, could be an updating of Bill Evans' celebrated Village Vanguard sets. With his perfectly formed notes, Fernández makes his composition "David M" a piano showcase with deep ruminations in the instrument's middle register. A swinging, near lullaby, it's also notable for Guy's slippery modulations that are unabashedly tonic. Barely there, with understated bounces on this track, López further exhibits his sensitive touch throughout. He confirms it on a tune such as "Don Miquel", where his nervy tomtom pulse and cymbal scrapes unite with the pianist's methodical keyboard strumming to frame Guy's solo gorgeously. Almost so-called classical in execution, the bassist manages to create two different sounds with his bow, before exciting with hand-pinched lines. There's a faint Latin tinge to "Don Miquel", carried over from Fernández' "Aurora" on the other disc. An Iberian take on Hispanic rhythms, the tremolo patterns reveal many notes in rapid succession, yet the line stretches enough to keep the impressionistic theme chromatic. Guy's retort features scrapped and stropped strings while the percussion undertow is mostly rim shots and what sounds like the hand-crushing of crisp paper. Other

pieces expose more abrasive back-and-forth group improv, often at lightning-quick speeds. At points Fernández' choruses echo from the piano's lower quadrant or he jabs at the keys while Guy bows.

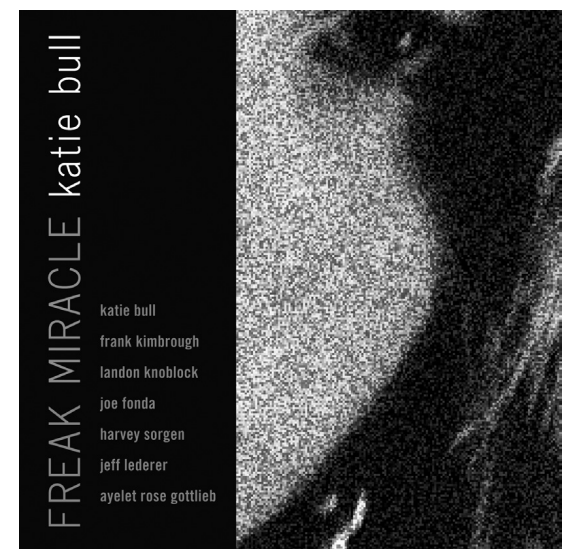
More atonal is *Kopros Lithos*, whose experimental textures arrive courtesy of the pianist, American trumpeter Peter Evans and the baritone saxophone and alto fluteophone of Swede Mats Gustafsson. There's no percussion but that doesn't stop it from being the most stentorian of the four sets. Between Evans' flighty squeals and wide-bore grace notes plus Gustafsson's verbal shouts, tongue slaps and growls from his baritone sax, there's enough discordance to go around. On a track such as "You displaced me by your singing", Fernández adds to the general din by continuously rubbing and plucking his piano strings as well as clattering various objects placed upon them. At the same time it's his methodical key-stopping that guides the trumpeter's flutter-tonguing and the saxophonist's metal-scraping honks to a more melodic interface. Perhaps those connective timbres from the keyboard also define the message behind another track title: "My fingers were glue". Certainly Fernández' pressure firmly shapes the parallel improvising from the horns. Here Evans buzzes and whinnies as if a metal sheet is pressed against his horn's bell while Gustafsson contributes high-velocity snorts and brays.

Fernández' pianistic control while improvising in a non-conventional manner is a tribute to his skill. It's also another indication why any and all of these discs are satisfying listens.

For more information, visit [emanemdisc.com/psi.html](http://emanemdisc.com/psi.html), [aumfidelity.com/riti.htm](http://aumfidelity.com/riti.htm), [mayarecordings.com](http://mayarecordings.com) and [multikulti.com](http://multikulti.com). Fernández is at The Stone Jul. 12th in duo with Joe Morris. See Calendar.

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