

EUROPEAN SCENE

By Peter Margasak

Jazz's roots in Europe are strong. This column looks at the musicians, labels, venues, institutions and events moving the scene forward "across the pond." For questions, comments and news about European jazz, e-mail europescene@downbeat.com.

Trombonist Wogram Charts Expansive Path

Throughout the last decade, Nils Wogram has become one of the most dominant and creative European trombonists since fellow German Albert Mangelsdorff. He plays in countless contexts—a progressive big band, an all-improvised duo with pianist Simon Nabatov, an organ trio called Nostalgia, among others—with a wide array of musicians. But despite being virtually unknown in the United States, he refuses to engage in transatlantic pot shots.

"I come from an American jazz tradition," Wogram said. "I never liked the competition between European and American jazz. The most interesting musicians are those who make honest music from this or another part of the world."

Wogram counts a two-year stint in New York starting in 1992 as one of his most profound experiences, checking out music several times a week, studying with Kenny Werner and Maria Schneider, and playing with musicians of all generations.

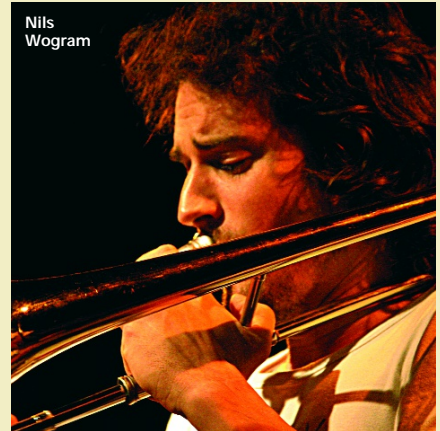
Born 35 years ago in Braunschweig, Wogram always listened to all kinds of sounds, as friends and family exposed him to about every style of Western music. When he began playing, at age 15, his catholic sensibilities remained, as he switched among classical music, traditional jazz or a big band.

"When I was young all of those styles

were pretty separated," Wogram said. "I would play avant-garde music and play '50s jazz and Latin, but I never combined them. When I got serious with my own band and started to compose more music, the styles merged and I did not think about styles anymore. If you like what you play and you feel it, you can sound like yourself in any style."

Today, Wogram uses his projects to focus on different aspects of his musical personality, but he remains recognizable in all of them, braiding a sophisticated grasp of the trombone's harmonic richness with a deeply lyric sensibility. His most active band is Root 70, a limber quartet with reedist Hayden Chisholm, bassist Matt Penman and drummer Jochen Rückert that pushes the leader's minimal post-bop themes to the breaking point, with an emphasis on subtle interaction. Nostalgia, with organist Florian Ross and drummer Dejan Terzic, has just released *Affinity* (Intuition), which borrows the instrumentation of Barbara Dennerlein's music with Ray Anderson, but eschews their slickness. His excellent septet shows off his inventiveness as an arranger.

Last year's terrific *Swing Moral* (enja) brings an Ellingtonian lushness and economy to a slew of indelible arrangements that massage and cajole the soloists with lovely counterpoint and harmonic beds. This band



Nils Wogram

JUAN CARLOS HERNANDEZ

may best represent Wogram's skill at navigating the past with totally contemporary ideas and techniques. As a sideman in drummer Lucas Niggli's Zoom, he demonstrates a more modern, hard-hitting sensibility, refracting beautifully within the kaleidoscopic harmonies of electric guitarist Philipp Schaufelberger. He's also played in Blue Niles, trumpeter Dave Douglas' new project dedicated to the music of Randy Weston.

Wogram, who lives in Zurich, Switzerland, balances his work as a musician with teaching.

"I know what I'm talking about when I speak to my students because everything I teach was experienced on stage or in the recording studio. It is not just theory." **DB**

The ARCHIVES

February 20, 1958

Stan Kenton:
A New Direction
By John Tynan

"I feel enthused about the future of ballrooms and bands," Kenton said. "A whole lot of young people are coming up to dance. These are a new generation of kids who not only want to dance, but are looking for jazz, too. And I don't mean the cool school. They want solid, belting, big band jazz. They're through with the rock 'n' roll phase, with Elvis Presley. This is the new dancing generation."

Chubby Jackson:
Cross Section
By Don Gold
"Jazz on television has never, until the last few months, been given its rightful stature," Jackson said. "It seems strange that on TV every form of music has been given the 'go' sign, but the most creative has been placed at the bottom of the barrel."

Red Rodney:
'Narcotics Nearly Killed Me'
By Dom Cerulli
"I became a criminal because I



needed money for narcotics," Red Rodney said. "I had been making big money playing

around New York and I had a big apartment on the east side. I never planned a job and I never got caught. But I got my punishment in a different way later."

High Fidelity
By John Tynan
If Paul Bley, a young Canadian pianist, has his way, he'll have stored on tape the best of every available jazz album. To date, he's been making good progress, having taped dozens of excerpts from a variety of LPs for his growing collection. **DB**