Article Courtesy AllAboutJazz.com

Roscoe Mitchell

By Kurt Gottschalk

The best American jazz artists have often had to look overseas for support. European labels have long proved to be reliable homes for adventurous music. From the looks of its first three releases, the French label Rogue Art might become another safe house.



Roscoe Mitchell

Rogue Art
2005

The most exciting of the label's inaugural issues is a new title from Art Ensemble of Chicago founder Roscoe Mitchell. In itself that is always a notable event, but this new group (with Mitchell's longtime rhythm section Jaribu Shahid and Tani Tabal on bass and drums along with new Art Ensemble trumpeter Corey Wilkes and the excellent young pianist Craig Taborn) stands among his greatest bands. They have all the role and bluster of Mitchell's Note Factory, but stripped down to an economic quintet. Across 14 quick tracks (five break the five-minute mark), they cover much of Mitchell's best improv settings, from jazz heads to percussion structures to horn drives and funky rhythms. The most striking thing here - as with recent Art Ensemble performances - is hearing Mitchell share the front line with a trumpeter so ready to deliver. The young man's gig filling Lester Bowie's shoes was a shock and in no way does he try to emulate the departed master, but he is clearly confident in the partnership. As a whole, the group is comfortable together, ready to let the compositions stand and while Shahid and Tabal haven't been the most exciting parts of Mitchell's groups, here they sound better than ever.