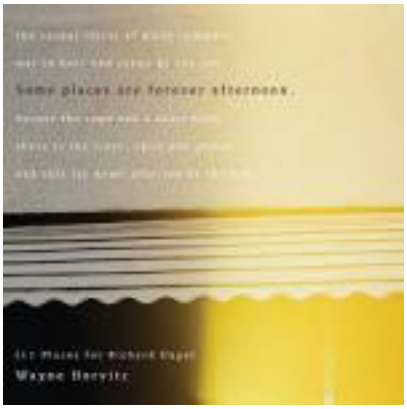
thejazzbreakfast
DISHING IT OUT FROM THE HEART OF ENGLAND

Wayne Horvitz – Some Places Are Forever Afternoon

BY PETER BACON *on* 18 SEPTEMBER 2015



(Songlines)

For the past few days I've been living in Montana. Not the actual North Western State of the U.S., you understand, but a fictional one, as created by the poet **Richard Hugo**, as interpreted by the composer and pianist **Wayne Horvitz** with his band, as photographed for this CD booklet by **Nica Horvitz**. It might be an imagined world but Hugo and the Horvitzs make it feel real. I'm reluctant to leave them.

Like his fellow Seattle resident, the guitarist Bill Frisell, Horvitz has the ability to create music that is thoroughly modern and steeped in history at the same time; universal in its communication yet rooted in a specific geographic place; able to be conveyed with personal freedom by other musicians and at the same time thoroughly personal. These are considerable gifts and they give the resulting music untold richness.

Horvitz really has met his ideal creative travelling companion in Hugo, albeit he has to make do with the man's poems (Hugo died in 1982).

The poet, when he wasn't teaching creative writing, spent a lot of time driving around the North West ("Never has your Buick found this forward a gear"), taking in the rural lifestyle ("You learn to ignore the wind leak in your shack"), the lonely men in bars ("On bad days in the bar you drink until you are mayor"), the big sky country ("warm milk at 15,000"), and the decayed industry ("the huge

mill in collapse for fifty years that won't fall finally down"), and yet despite these downbeat quotes, he finds beauty and hope, reflecting the life spirit in the beauty of his phrases.

Wayne Horvitz

Horvitz achieves the same in music. He plays piano, Hammond B-3 and minimal electronics, and has **Ron Miles** on cornet, **Sara Schoenbeck** on bassoon, **Peggy Lee** on cello, **Tim Young** on guitar, **Keith Lowe** on bass and **Eric Eagle** on drums. Just reading that instrumentation you can imagine the richness of its sonorities.

Over 12 tracks, 11 of them titled with quotes from individual Hugo poems which are printed in the booklet alongside the luminous colour photographs, the band explores the open road, the distant mountains, the lush forests, the tumbled down barns, the fairground rides in town squares, the battered main-street bars, but most importantly the feelings, the sensations, the beauty that is their essence. The lives may be small-town but the trials and tribulations endured are no smaller than anyone else's, and are all the more well-defined as a result.

It's not really appropriate to pick out any individual track – it works very much as a suite, themes seeming to emerge and disappear, with later glimpses… It's all exquisitely orchestrated and yet feels uncontrived, a completely natural ebb and flow of unclassifiable music, taking in jazz, classical, folk… in fact instrumental Americana might be the most appropriate label, if it has to have one.

One of the CD highlights of my year so far, and so most highly recommended.

Horvitz has set up a blog to accompany this project. There is more there than first appears, so do click on the individual photographs to find lots more behind them, as well as Hugo poems. It's here.