

# LAW WEEKLY

FREE

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## IVO PERELMAN

### *Children of Ibeji (Enja)*

Only a truly Wonderful World can offer you a free-jazz saxophonist from Brazil with a name like Ivo Perelman, and I admit that I feel ungrateful about liking the idea of such an entity more than I like his actual music. *Children of Ibeji* is my third exposure, the first two having been his debut recording, *Ivo*, and a live videotape, and I think I have learned how to enjoy him: listen selectively.

Strange to say, the selection process often requires tuning out Perelman himself. The stage is always set for glory, because Perelman never fails to get the toppest of avant-garde jazz musicians to support him, in this case including Dag Pullen, Paul Blev, Fred Hopkins and Andrew Cyrille. And Perelman, with his obvious affection for '50s stormbringers like Pharoah Sanders, Archie Shepp and John Coltrane, is ever geared to blow free. While this kind of music is highly collaborative and empathetic, though, Perelman often sounds as if he's playing by himself. He gets some good effects: scaps, squeals, a rich vibrato to rival Sanders or Gato Barbieri, his ability to party and belly-ache simultaneously is impressive. But you can't help noticing how much more whole the ensemble sounds when he drops out.

Once you've figured out whom you're going to listen to, the game gets to be a lot more fun. Four mule-whipping percussionists (Manolo Badrena, Guilherme Franco, Frank Colon and Mor Thiam in addition to Cyrille) get their licks in, and their chain-dance rhythm following Perelman's solo on "Mina Do Santa" sets up an omnivorous wobblechord bass solo by Hopkins. Similarly, Antonio Carlos Jobim's "O Morro" doesn't jell until Perelman yields to Pullen's split-brained piano. A hot chant from Flora Purim, effortless cymbal dazzle from Cyrille, Pullen's electroshock samba on "Chant for Oshum" — all things come to him who waits.

And you do have to wait and wade a good deal in the free-jazz selections, which is to say most of the disc. It's a concept record inspired by the killing of hundreds of children at the hands of Brazil's paramilitary squads, with traditional Brazilian folk songs as the musical foundation. But the traditional melodies rarely make it past the first few bars. And when Perelman plays it straight, you wonder why he's obsessed with free improv, because the straight ballads are the only occasions when he sounds totally at home. "Chant for Logum" is a duet with Blev in which Perelman's melodic improvisations grow and throbb beautifully, and Blev's piano responds with a wrenching display of troubled romanticism. Then you have to wait for the final track, "Cantar," for a comparable show of heart as Brandon Ross plucks a delicate guitar to set off Perelman's jazzy love story.

Maybe you noticed that those two successful tunes are also two of the album's sparest. Beneath his armor of expressionistic blurt, Perelman is a sensitive, lonely guy. The music suggests that, for him, lonely is lover. (Greg Burk)