

REVIEWS

Douze Points Festival Project, Dublin

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For its second annual festival for young European jazz musicians, the Improvised Music Company ratcheted up the diversity quotient several notches and was rewarded with full houses, or close, for every night of the four-day event. And though the festival threw up no great revelations, its diversity was also, with one or two exceptions, musically rewarding.

You could infer from this that the jazz mantle has passed to Europe from its original American home, but US critics such as Bill Shoemaker have been decidedly shirty about that suggestion. What seems more likely, and the festival tends to back it up, is that European jazz musicians are comfortable within the broad stream of jazz tradition and their own folk and cultural norms – both are part of the scenery.

It does produce wide differences. Cologne's Shreefpunk, a brilliant quartet with an astonishing trumpeter, Mathias Schriebl, spent more time on musical jokes than anything else, and what emerged was a tiresome blend of Spike Jones and his City Slickers and *Cabaret*. On the other hand, Helsinki's lovely and individual Oddarang, using voices, cello, trombone, bottleneck guitar, bass and drums, was about composition, textures and moods. With feather-soft dynamics and reduced scope for improvisation, it was like a distant contemporary cousin of Chico Hamilton's 1950s quintet.

The Radio String Quartet Vienna used the classic format to address the music of John

McLaughlin. Dynamic and brilliant performers though they are, it would require greater familiarity with the source music, personally, to know what fresh dimensions they gave it or what illumination they shone on it.

The festival offered two examples – three, if you count Italy's Giovanni Guidi Quartet, as its tenor saxophonist was essentially a peripheral

figure – of the piano trio, the jazz equivalent of the classic string quartet. Switzerland's Urs Bollhalder Trio tastefully worked in a narrow emotional climate to the point of being one-dimensional, and while Guidi was more adventurous, he remains a gifted player still finding his own voice.



Points made: vibes player Pascal Schumacher, pianist Justin Carroll of Togetherness, trumpeter Mathias Schriebl from Shreefpunk, and Radio String Quartet Vienna (from left, Cynthia Liao, Asja Valcic, Johannes Dickbauer and Bernie Mallinger). Main photograph: Herbert Flois