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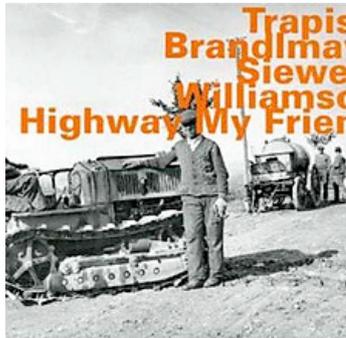
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Tropic Highway My Friend Review

Album. Released 12 February 2003.



BBC Review

Curiously minimal free improvisation from low power bass, drums and guitar trio.

Peter Marsh 2003-02-18

This trio chose their name well; although they haven't quite taken a vow of silence, they get pretty close to it at times. If Tropic are a power trio (and a casual glance at the guitar, bass, drums lineup might lead you to think so), they're running on an ancient car battery rather than the national grid.

This deliberate, sparse improv is about what isn't played as much as anything else. If Morton Feldman, John Cage and David Tudor had formed a rock band, they might have sounded a bit like this. On the opening tracks, Martin Siewert's minimalist guitar is hardly there; faint pencil strokes of melody or resonant drones are framed by clicks, buzzes and static. Martin Brandmayr's drumming is as much about texture as rhythm, while Joe Williamson's bass adds a warm, dark throb.

Williamson is also credited with 'trackball'. Whether this is connected to a laptop or not isn't made clear, but occasionally more obviously electronic elements creep in, though what generates them isn't clear either. "Impex" appears to feature a modem undergoing torture, and many of the sounds here resemble equipment malfunction as much as anything else. As the album goes on Tropic get progressively less interested in silence, engaging in comparatively hyperactive exchanges which hum with a repressed, focussed energy, sometimes settling into spare, sinewy grooves.

Siewert's guitar is alternately abstract scabble or desolate, almost bluesy in best John Fahey mode. This is best heard on the fragile "Mine Was The Shoulder You Cried On That Day", where he carefully places long, mournful notes over a soft, tumbling bed of drums and bass. It's the most conventionally beautiful moment on a CD stuffed with moments of stranger, alien beauties. Brilliant stuff.

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Tracks

- 1 Mascoma
- 2 FM
- 3 Impex
- 4 E101
- 5 Mine Was the Shoulder You Cried on That Day
- 6 Fenrus
- 7 Mile

Tracklistings come from [MusicBrainz](#). You can add or edit information about [Highway My Friend](#) at [musicbrainz.org](#). [Find out more about our use of this data](#), and also our policy on [profanity](#)

Release Details

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2002 Switzerland

CD hatOLOGY 586

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