

# CDR-ING



Benny Green and Christian McBride  
by Mark Ladenson



Billy Higgins by Mark Ladenson

**T**his batch of CDRs proves that Free Jazz continues to find roots in a number of local scenes and throws in two more straight-ahead, tradition-based sessions as well.

One may not think of New Hampshire as a hotbed of Free Jazz activity, but the group **EQUAL TIME** disproves that theory with two releases. **WE WAKE** (Avant Coast no#) captures the trio of Thom Keith (rds), Mike Walsh (d), and Tim Webb (b) in a series of improvisations credited as “Basement Tapes.” (Warm Up/ Sound Song/ Six Over Two/ Road Trip. 57:08. Dover, NH, 5/06 – 8/06.) These three have open ears and know how to drive these collective improvisations with an elastic flow. There is an egalitarian sensibility at play as focus moves dynamically between reeds, bass, and drums. Webb and Keith play off of each other expertly as circuitous reed lines bob and weave their way across the muscular bass lines. Walsh is an understated player who knows how to kick the improvisations along with a limber free swing. The three manage to draw out a sense of simmering urgency across this set. On **REGENERATION X** (Avant Coast 11) trombonist Derek Kwong is added to the trio of Keith, Walsh, and Webb. (Regeneration X: Phase 1; Regeneration X: Phase 2; Regeneration X: Phase 3; Cryptozoology; Yrrehs Mas; Life Force; Central Avenue Rebirth. 73:54. Dover, NH, 5/6/07.) With a trombone and sax front line, the music is far more pulse based, with bass and drums laying down coursing polyrhythms for Keith and Kwong to blow over. Keith’s playing is more fiery than on the trio disk. He builds his solos from melodic flow to biting overtones. Kwong responds with brassy free bluster. As with the trio disk, Walsh and Webb also get plenty of room to stretch out. When they move toward total freedom, things start to fray a bit. The quartet works best when riding across a potent free groove. This is particularly true on the rollicking call and response of “Yrrehs Mas.” The live recording captures the group on a strong night.

Reed player **CARL SMITH** has been a mainstay on the Austin, Texas, improv scene since the mid '90s running a revolving trio under the moniker ECEFA. Their newest release **DERWALD** (ECEFA 2007) features Smith along with soprano sax player Holland Hopson and drummer J Friedrich for a series of Smith’s compositions along with a few free improvisations and a reading of Steve Lacy’s “The Retreat.” (Aspects of the Dream/ Ergeben/ Friedrichsfelde [free improvisation]/ Kleine Widerhallen/ Wuhletal/ Adlershof/ Schyggullplatz/ The Retreat/ Kleine Tanz. 38:04, Austin, TX, no date.) Sticking to tenor, soprano, and drums line-up brings a focus to the session. Smith and Hopson are both linear players with an angular sense of Free melodicism. Friedrich’s tuned kit fills