

SCOTT TINKLER: THE LONE TRUMPETER

by John Clare*

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‘Phil Slater and Scott Tinkler are the most important trumpet players in the world,’ Paul Grabowsky told me recently. ‘They’re down here and nobody knows about them!’ The tyranny of distance limits my ability to judge this ‘most important’ stuff but I was not dismayed by the claim.

Slater has a superb new disc which we will review soon. Meanwhile Tinkler has succeeded astoundingly with the sort of project not heard since the heady days of free jazz: a disc almost entirely of solo trumpet. Many have said they would wait for the right mood before facing it. I put it on straight away, not in the mood and intending to sample a minute or so. I could not stop listening.



Phil Slater: he and Scott Tinkler are the most important trumpet players in the world, according to Paul Grabowsky...PHOTO COURTESY FACEBOOK

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First there is astonishment at the resources of imagination and technique. Using a Harmon mute, pushed into the bell and frequently withdrawn part way, Tinkler creates an uncanny one-man duet. The partly open notes at first mewl and croon like the unnervingly human sounds of an aroused cat. Soon the muted lines begin to race and into these the open notes are inserted so deftly and improbably that it is almost impossible to believe there are no overdubs. There are not. It is aural sleight of hand.



Tinkler: astonishment at the resources of imagination and technique... PHOTO COURTESY FACEBOOK

Soon Tinkler's unique open tone (if you are prone to synaesthesia you may hear it as bronze, as old gold, as gingery brass) is released with shattering power in blazes of staccato speed; in massive blasts and long shining notes that weave and sustain melodic shapes that are Tinkler's own and with some hint of Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*. Partly obstructing this huge sound with his tongue as well as by partially depressing the valves, Tinkler creates effects like wind rising far off in the desert, or the static you hear between stations on short wave radio.



Scott Tinkler: he creates effects like wind rising far off in the desert, or the static you hear between stations on short wave radio...PHOTO CREDIT JOE GLAYSHER

Later in the disc, Tinkler accompanies himself with a spare hand on gongs and cymbals, struck and brushed with beautiful delicacy of touch and an accuracy of placement that makes their ringing an extension of the trumpet's overtones. This section is a little painting really, in subtle and sharp shades of brass. Later, a bass drum is introduced, then trickling, burbling water. The trumpet then plays half-submerged.

And more. The question that will suggest itself is whether this performance would be so exhilarating and engrossing if everything played lay within the capabilities of a reasonably accomplished musician. I think yes. The sounds would intrigue, startle and excite however they were produced and attention is held just as surely by the intense pursuit of musicality and meaning in diverse textures and sounds.

In fact the listener soon forgets that this is all created by man and trumpet, with objects at hand used sparingly along the way. Some effects—when the trumpet is dismantled and its bits of tubing played—sound electronic; and sometimes you might be hearing music concrete. Most of it comes out of the trumpet.

Tinkler more usually plays with bass and drums. Complex and polyrhythmic, his regular band is so forceful and driven, so masculine and intent on creating excitement, that to hear *Backwards* is to hear another side of a very considerable artist.