

Anthony Braxton Quartet – Dortmund (1976)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Composition 40F – Composition 23J*
2. *Composition 40 (O)*
3. *Composition 6C*
4. *Composition 40B*

Anthony Braxton - Clarinet, Clarinet (Contrabass), Contrabass Saxophone, E Flat Clarinet, Sax (Alto), Sax (Bass), Sax (Sopranino), Sax (Soprano) George Lewis – Trombone Dave Holland – Bass Barry Altschul - Drums, Percussion

Braxton has produced many excellent recordings through the years, but only a small number stand out from the pack the way this one does. This version of his pianoless quartet is captured live in an inspired, energized performance at the first Dortmund Jazz Festival in Germany. Trombonist George Lewis had only recently joined the group, replacing the more introspective trumpeter Kenny Wheeler. Braxton's compositions are uniformly brilliant, incorporating marching band themes, lightening-fast hard bop-influenced runs, and strings of non-syncopated eighth notes, all of which contribute to a sense of wonder and excitement. Also, Braxton is in marvelous form on his varied horns, springing forth an arsenal of seemingly endless ideas. His lengthy solo on "Composition 40 F" is among his best on disc, garnering a well-deserved enthusiastic reaction from the audience. By bringing Lewis into the group, Braxton helped to nurture one of the most astonishing and technically virtuosic trombonists in all of jazz. The young Lewis is hardly intimidated by the celebrity quality of the group, and from the outset, he engages in mouth-watering displays that match the saxophonist note for note. Whether playing open or muted, Lewis was one of the most effective interpreters of Braxton's complex compositions. There are fine contributions, too, from drummer Barry Altschul and especially bassist Dave Holland, but the intricate compositions themselves and the incredible soloing of the horns are what mark this one for the big leagues. Graham Lock's knowledgeable, erudite liners are a big plus in helping to understand this difficult but highly rewarding music. ---Steve Loewy, Rovi

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