

## CD REVIEW

**ARTIST:** FLIPSIDE

**TITLE:** FLIPSIDE

**LABEL:** FLIP 03

**TUNES:** CURSE OF THE LUCKY MAN / SAFE AT THE CHEESEPLATE / WALTER MARCHES IN / HAPPY WANDERER / FLIPPITY FLOOP / BI-POLAR BEAR / TEXICAN FAT PANTS / LONELY HAG / THE RIVER / BULGARIAN FOLK SONG / AFTERNOON NAP

**PERSONNEL:** Dennis Durick, d, perc; Dave Monsch, ss, ts, b cl, flt, vcl, perc; Paul Unger, b, loops, effects. Feb. 23-4 2011, Argyle, Texas.

Dennis Durick and Dave Monsch are fixtures on the music scene in the Dallas Fort Worth Metroplex, and busy performers in various genres. Dennis Unger is all this with a special distinction, since, in addition to his jazz projects, he holds down the chair of Assistant Principal Bass of the Fort Worth Symphony. This CD, released in December 2011, amply substantiates the group's claim to work "in a true ensemble style – with each member carrying equal weight" (see the description at <http://www.flipsidetheband.com/about.htm>). The result is that the horn steps back a little, while bass and drums step forward. The rhythm players are more than equal to the task. Durick's drums are fluid, flexible and precise, and Unger's bass sound, both in pizzicato and arco, is big, round, and wonderfully in tune, enabling it to carry the primary burden of establishing clear harmonies. The other hallmark of this CD is its variety. The music is full of metrical variety, not only in meter proper and tempo, but it is also full of pauses, irregular phrase lengths, and accents unusual in jazz. Metrical oddities, at least for Western ears, abound in the traditional "Bulgarian Folk Song." The latter choice demonstrates Flipside's taste for world music, understood in this instance as ethnic music. "Texican Fat Pants" also has an ethnic touch, but is Durick's own creation, one of two pieces he brings to the CD. The rest are from Monsch and Unger. Different instrumental textures also abound. In addition to sax, bass, and drums, Monsch adds flute and bass clarinet, the spoken word – used to great effect on "The River" – and percussion; Unger adds recorded loops and various sound effects to the mix; Durick brings in other percussion, while Fender Rhodes and organ are added on three other tracks. So despite the trio format, Flipside is not aiming for a minimalist trio sound. Another very important aspect of the variety of this CD has to do with genre. I have mentioned the term "jazz", almost necessarily so given Cadence's identification with the genre. But in so doing, I do not mean to imply that "Flipside" is a jazz CD. It is Flipside's intent to keep us guessing as to how to classify their music. They describe themselves as "frustrated by the limitations imposed from the commercialism of the music industry and the pressure to conform to a narrow style..." Yes, there are bluesy and funky elements in tunes like "Bi-Polar Bear" and "Afternoon Nap", traces of a more hard-driving jazz style in "Flippity Floop," hints of Ornette Coleman's early work — with Unger filling the role of Charlie Haden — in "Happy Wanderer", but just as many sallies in other directions. I personally approve of the pushing of generic barriers. On the other hand, there is a risk involved such eclecticism. Sometimes I felt myself asking the question: Does Flipside have a sound and a feeling that they want to communicate? As to sound, their choices are so eclectic that I feel incapable of answering the question. The CD however does convey a powerful sense of simple, childlike joy when I hear it, and it is laudable that these three musicians have let their emotional guard down enough to convey it.

Jeffrey D. Todd

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