

102 minutes of Wonderful Jazz

The Reto Suhner Quartet delivers a first class album with "20" *****

If you write the surname of the ingenious, bustling namesake of the Reto Suhner Quartet, the autocorrection cannot decide between atonement and cream ... Which is really funny, as you can easily associate both with this rich double album: "Atonement" is used as "reparation", but is also defined as an "act of disruption and correction" which ends with "reconciliation" or "the conclusion of peace".

If one takes from "20" (ANUKLabel ★★★★★) only the words "Entstörung" and "Versöhnung", we have exactly what this great work does for a classical, but also partly dated genre. And "Sahne" is really often elevated to "very first cream" here. Because: "20" is a 102-minute jazz wonder! Grassroots democracy is very important to Suhner, meaning that he treats his three comrades-in-arms on piano, bass and percussion to every instrumental spontaneous maneuver, every creative form of subversion. The listener benefits from this, because it drills and pinches, lurches and plucks, vibrates and pulsates blissfully. Wonderfully organic and dramaturgically sophisticated, this dream team delivers. Nevertheless, in the end Suhner deserves the greatest credit for his playing on clarinet and saxophone. Joyful playing is no expression at all!

Saarbrücker newspaper, Andreas Lüschen-Heimer

Reto Suhner- Liveliness instead of perfection

In year 2020, 20 new compositions for the 20th anniversary of his quartet: In an interview with JAZZ'N'MORE, 46-year-old Reto Suhner talks about his time during Corona, why teaching can lead to new perspectives and why Tai Chi can also have a positive effect on jazz.

J'N'M: Reto Suhner, how was your experience during the Covid-19 crisis lockdown?

RaS: So far so good. I was lucky that I was allowed to continue teaching. Since the concerts were all cancelled, a part of the community feeling was missing. But the music still took place, simply alone. It feels as if I had been talking to myself alone for a very long time.

J'N'M: The double album is entitled "20". What was the idea behind it?

RS: We went into the studio for three days last year. I wrote a lot, we recorded without thinking much and in the end, we suddenly had 20 songs. I thought then: Okay, the quartet has been around for 20 years and it's the year 2020. Somehow, I had an angle, even if it wasn't planned that way. The songs also turned out very differently. There were also voices that raised the question whether it would make sense in a time where music is only heard via playlists. For me it makes total sense. I want to be active and productive and do what I like. It is a form of freedom.

J'N'M: The first piece is called "Simple". The name is deceptive, it's actually anything but simple.

RS: The melody is very simple. If you start from there, the name is already correct.

J'N'M: But then it depends on what you do with it in combination.

RS: Exactly

J'N'M: Many songs seem like wolves in sheep's clothing. That's what you think at first with "Supi" or "Duftsiegel", I've heard that somewhere before. Then you know how to go on. But then there are subtle twists and surprising breaks that mislead our listening expectations.

RS: Ultimately, it is also a game with the individual listening experience.

J'N'M: With "Supi" it's these bossa-nova rhythms at the beginning, where you're already getting ready to settle down and then suddenly: Surprise! There are potholes in the terrain.

RS: (laughs) I like surprises. Jazz for me is freedom, improvisation, expression. But even in jazz there are things that don't reach me emotionally. If I already know something, then I get bored. That's why I am primarily interested in liveliness.

J'N'M: You mentioned that you also teach. Do the artist and the educator sometimes get in each other's way? Does one run the risk of making music that is only technical and no longer expressive?

RS: There are moments when I play, where I think it's too systematic. Or when I try out certain things in class that make me realize I'm overwhelming my students. But sometimes the opposite happens. I had a student once who played a blues where

he played every note as a trill. I had never heard anything like it before. And as a teacher I was even paid for this inspiration! (laughs)

J'N'M: You could ask the same question in a positive way. That you get to hear fresh approaches from young people.

RS: I am not a perfectionist. I do things in a playful way and actually try to constantly spark my imagination. And that can happen in a concert as well as in a lesson.

J'N'M: There are great virtuosos who are masters of everything on the instrument and yet the music doesn't live through them.

RS: Exactly. The students often have the problem that the school system is very much focused on perfection. In such cases I emphasize where the music actually comes from. It used to be played on social or spiritual occasions. Perfection didn't play a role there. It was about energy, movement, resonance. At some point, the sounds began to vibrate within you.

J'N'M: How do you see the relationship between improvisation and composition? The improvisation, it arises from the moment. Composition exists on a different time axis, both because of its genesis, but also because it is immortalized on paper.

RS: In Zurich we have a kind of composer jam, the Composers collective. We meet once a month, and everyone writes something for the band. So, I am constantly in the process of writing. And sometimes I am late (laughs). So, I once wrote a piece five minutes before, which consisted only of wavy lines that everyone had to play. I called the composition "The investors are nervous". (laughs)

J'N'M: I suppose not everything happens on such short notice.

RS: I've been pursuing a new concept for about two years now. I applied this to three new pieces, namely "Balance Sheet Extension", "The Distribution Question" and "Scent Seal". There I first wrote the breaks. The first thing I do is to write down the time signature or bar lines. Then I write in the rests and only after that, then I write any notes. Sometimes this doesn't make any sense at all at the beginning and much happens completely by chance when I write the notes. Afterwards I play this arrangement over and over again. It is as if I am learning a foreign word and slowly, I begin to understand how it is meant. There is an organic quality between the elements and suddenly it becomes a coherent melody.

J'N'M: Then suddenly composing is no longer a lonely business because the music starts to speak to you. It comes to a dialogue.

RS: Right. I am constantly trying out new things. With "Diplomjäger", the drummer can specify whether the line is played from left to right or from right to left. In the beginning it was so that none of us could read from right to left. How does that work? Do I have to write it down? Such things are exciting.

J'N'M: If we talked before about the song titles that make you curious while reading. "Diplomjäger", "Pensenkontrolle", "Verteilungsfrage", "Bilanzverlängerung". They also read as a commentary on society.

RS: Yes, sometimes there are socio-political conditions that interest me. But "Pensenkontrolle" actually only comes from the everyday work of a teacher who has to fill out a corresponding sheet.

J'N'M: Which brings us back to the wolf in sheep's clothing. As a factual title, "Pensenkontrolle" promises to be a piece written according to the 08/15 stencil written piece. But then this work is juggled and the eye blinks again.

RS: With "Pensenkontrolle", the keynote and fifth were always defined, and you could judge for yourself whether and how you wanted to play it. Like movement exercises in which you can move the pieces back and forth like on a pencil sheet. Or "substitute composition". I dedicated this piece to the SBB. When the loudspeaker at the station says that a replacement composition is coming, I, as a musician, expect a new piece. (laughs)

J'N'M: You introduced "Saxophone Silent Teaching" on the Internet during the Corona lockdown...

RS: I have a few private students, they had a lot of time, but they didn't really know what to make of it. There are a lot of music instruction videos on the internet where two hours of just talking is all that's needed. When I explain something to my students, they understand it intellectually, but the body has not yet understood anything. But because the brain knows, they think: Okay, I can do this. With "Silent Teaching" I try to go the opposite way and just leave out the words. There are topics that can be taught very easily without speaking.

J'N'M: You improvise in a duo with Fabian M. Mueller and in the project Multimulti with Scott Robinson and Steffen Schorn. But in the end, they have remained true to the quartet over all these years. Why?

RS: That's a good question. I think it is again about playing with listening habits. Especially also because the quartet is the most common variation in this line-up.

J'N'M: You also teach Tai Chi. Is there also an interplay with the music?

RS: There are many parallels. If I achieve the same relaxed concentration when playing as I do with Tai Chi, then everything feels good. If you change the instrument while playing, it usually takes a moment to adjust. But when I am in this relaxed concentration, I succeed immediately. Even before I play the tone, I know that it will sound exactly as it already exists in my imagination.

J'N'M: I think that the serenity that I have worked out becomes audible to the audience.

RS: There's a story about that: My mother is not so musical, so it's not me who says that, but she says it about herself (laughs). She thought it was great that I released my first album as leader with "Born in Herisau", but she didn't listen to it. When I listen to the record today, I notice how I struggled with myself back then and wanted to do things that I couldn't play. Nowadays the pieces are more complex, both compositionally and in terms of sound. But there is also this relaxedness and that's why my mother listens to the music now. She notices how I feel when I play. And that is naturally very beautiful. (smiles)

Jazz'n'More, July 2020 Rudolf Amstutz

The Swiss jazz musician Reto Suhner has been working with his quartet since 2000. In 2016, it was his album ""Easy", a living part of the Swiss jazz scene, that really inspired me. We find the same musicians on the double CD 20.

Once again, the four musicians create a very dense and harmonious atmosphere. I was struck by the somnambulistic unity, whereby I particularly liked the soft and warm sound of the saxophonist's playing at the time. But the music on this record is even more creative, and you take your time to enjoy it on the 20 songs. The number is not only characterized by the number of songs, because, see above - one celebrates the 20th anniversary of this quartet, and this is also celebrated extensively, and I as a participant of the party can only rejoice because of the high-quality food that this buffet offers.

The result is music that uses a large palette of the manifold colors and paints 20 small pictures, all of them small masterpieces, sometimes quite adventurous. "Simple", as a prelude to the first CD, sounds like cultivated jazz in a bar, at night, when there are still few guests and let the evening come to an end in a calm and lascivious mood, a little lost in thought about missed opportunities, about the meaning of life, and in addition the band plays loosely swinging jazz, at first as a piano trio, until after a good four minutes the saxophonist finally enters the stage to expand the nightly mood with bass saxophone and contra alto clarinet. With "Jolán's Kräutergarten" it continues in a very cool way, a little cool jazz with an atmosphere that reminds me a little bit of the music of Lee Konitz. Track 3: dreamily creeping along, with wordless singing, a little Latin touch in the direction of Purim/Moreira radiates this, it could be Wayne Shorter joining in. And with the fourth song it is already different again. Here the jazz is supplemented by fusion elements. So, this very colorful variety runs through the whole record, and we are still at the first CD of the double album 20, with 20 tracks.

The line-up shows how the versatility is supported by the abundance of instruments used, so we experience a Theremin on "Polypoly" (for those who don't know this sound yet - it appeared as a howling sound once with the Beach Boys and "Good Vibrations", but there it was the very similar sounding Tannerin).

This is immediately emphasized after inserting the CD 2, Suhner uses the mridangam, a doubtful double-sided drum, and the shruti box, an instrument similar to the harmonium, in addition to his soprano saxophone. A modular synthesizer (CD2, #3) is also used to add unusual timbres to jazz, and other exotic instruments find their way in various ways, further synthesizers, or a bansuri (CD2, #7) or a duduk (CD2, #10). So, it's a real pleasure to experience jazz in a new way with a traditional basis and an additional fresh cell cure by including "foreign" elements. In this way this music stays alive and gives hope for its continued existence.

(19/20)

Wolfgang Giese, Music an sich, 8.6.2020

On the quartet's info sheet it says "Make the gates wide"; that fits 100%. Like a mighty wave of sounds the 20 songs of the double album come over you. The saxophonist Reto Suhner (born 1974) has been part of the permanently prospering Swiss jazz scene for an unbelievable 20 years. Like on "20", the birthday record, he surprises with unconventional jazz, which is often impulsive, sometimes lyrical, but definitely inspiring. Some of the compositions are by Philip Henzi, who plays a Wurlitzer next to the piano and creates excitement with electronic decorations on his Moog. There is often a creaking in the jazz woods, and you can hear the wind whistling, wolves howling or mysterious doors creaking. Adventurous is in all this, you transfer jazz tradition into a today or tomorrow. Technical perfection is not explicitly taken care of, one uses one's energies for flaming improvisations and ammunition-loaded sound paintings. The fact that the art of music and beats ignite in this way is also connected with the fact that Suhner in particular uses instruments from foreign cultures (India, Armenia, China...). In addition to the usual saxophones, he uses the C-tenor saxophone, the alto clarinet, the bass saxophone, the

Shruti Box, the Bansuri or the Theremin. Silvan Jeger (b) and Dominic Egli (dr) of course keep up excellently and hardly deviate from the rhythmic requirements. Great album!

Concerto 8, 2020 ewei

The Swiss saxophonist Reto Suhner is active in many forms, his quartet of the same name is the most long-lived one so far, albeit with changed players. He founded the group 20 years ago, in which he currently has Philip Henzi on keyboard and flugelhorn, Silvan Jeger on bass and Dominic Egli on drums. For this occasion, he named his album "20", he composed and recorded as many songs as he possibly could. However, the vinyl-friend only gets a selection of eight songs, but also a download code for the complete work. The chosen form of instrumentation of the quartet allows one to indulge in the standard and follow familiar paths that many others have already taken, on the other hand, breakouts are always possible to do the unexpected. He also draws his influences from admiration for other musicians or from working with them. Wayne Shorter is an influence and is one who knows how to combine tradition with mysticism. The joint work with multi-instrumentalist Scott Robinson has also influenced Reto Suhner. A variety of saxophones are used on "20", as well as Indian flutes and a contrabass clarinet. With these ingredients, Reto Suhner creates an original jazz form that surprises again and again, even though its basic mood is rather calm. The Reto Suhner Quartet rests within itself, builds up tension arcs, in order to then dare to break out at suitable points. The musicians always remain grounded and address a broad audience with their musical language. "20" is a publication more than appropriate to the occasion, in which many new things can be discovered. Conclusion: 41 (Vinyl) or 105 minutes (Digital) musical genre dusting.

LP October/November 2020, Genre: Special Jazz

"The idea of the moment"

Crackling jazz. Atmospheric and expressive at the same time „Easy“, the new album of the Swiss saxophonist Reto Suhner. The opening piece is called "Die Schlafende Acht" („The Sleeping Eight“), in which the strings of the contrabass flick juicily, Suhner's soprano saxophone joins in, the piano develops the theme further and the drum interconnects the different lines with a finely chiselled pulse.

“The idea of the moment or of coincidence plays an important role in our music, says Suhner; it is just this openness which characterises “Easy”. This music has nothing in common with a gentle breeze or an animated easy listening.

On the contrary: The band poaches cheekily in the history of modern jazz and interprets it freshly in its own way. With odd meters, as well as with hard breaks in melody and harmonic, the Reto Suhner quartet manages to create a crackling tension almost casually – and make listening truly enjoyable, despite its sophisticated approach.

Basler Zeitung 3.23.2016

The Democrat

Baden – He is amongst the most talented improvisers of contemporary jazz: Reto Suhner.

Reto Suhner is neither a loud mouth nor a creeper.

Even though the saxophonist, born in 1974, is one of the most dazzling improvisers of contemporary jazz, he is anything but a dazzler. Suhner, who also teaches at the Kantonsschule Baden (college in Baden), says: „I don't want to become famous; I want to make progress in order to express my ideas more accurately.“ One may well believe him. Not lastly, Suhner gained his formidable reputation through his persistence. So, as an utterly democratic bandleader, he focuses on the communicative interplay of the quartet for many years now. To Suhner's current quartet belong the pianist Philip Henzi, the bass player Silvan Jeger and the drummer Dominic Egli; three wide awake interplay-specialists, who know how to handle the given material

in a free spirited and creative way – no matter whether it is a dazzling ballad ("Portrait of Jennie") or a daring combination of Coltrane-harmonies and odd meter rhythms ("Alles"). These and seven additional songs are on his new, sublime studio album „Easy“ (Anuk), which was recorded about a year ago. During live performances, the band often interweaves several pieces in a spontaneous fashion into a suite. Suhner says: The idea of the moment as well as coincidence plays an important role.“ Suhner not only is brilliant at being a bandleader, but he is also a variable phrasing saxophonist. A sound alchemist with a high degree of originality.

Tom Gsteiger, Aargauer Zeitung (Newspaper of Aargau) 3/2016

Someone who wants to dive right into modern improvised jazz like Coltrane or Coleman, is well off with the Swiss saxophonist Reto Suhner. Together with Philip Henzi at the piano and keyboards, as well as Dominic Egli on drums and Silvan Jeger on bass, the man from Appenzell, proves that old and new can well be reduced to a common denominator. The quartet's work is characterised by original pieces, in which the improvisational potential of the single musician is astounding every time anew. Heart, what more can you ask for! No matter whether lyrical, lively or extremely rhythmical, the Reto

Suhner quartet achieves a perfect clamping of composition and improvisation. It doesn't have to be the big names all the time, if you want some clever and fresh jazz.

Sound-and-Image 4.3.2016

Switzerland, one of the leading countries in the field of modern jazz and the place to be for ambitious, young musicians of this guild, has Reto Suhner, a wood wind before the lord, who wins you over with his new quartet album because: on it the classical recipe is mixed with fresh ingredients.

"Easy" is an artifice in as far as the sound flows but at the same time and in a positive sense is jolting, for all one's worth, so that the listener is astonished and keeps at it, without having to make intellectual contortions. Besides all the cleverness of the musicians, everything on the album seems extremely easy and not too elegant, as the swinging title piece exemplifies.

Minimal melodies ("Die schlafende Acht" / „The sleeping Eight“) fit in as well as unusual timbres, as the whimsical organ in the meddlesome „Alles“ („Everything“) or the out-of-tune sounding piano. („The human momentum“). But above all, it is the motific inventiveness and rigour of the presented itself in its striking impromptu moments, of which there are many, despite they are all "written down" pieces.

The harmonic unison between saxophone and singing voice during "Illusions III: Colour", which apart from that focuses on the rhythm section, was surely not planned this way, whereas bourdon-like, extensive structures – carpets of sound in excess of the conventional weaving – surely were not spontaneously created, but still fit into the arrangement without cheap showmanship. These pieces of music, which in average take about six minutes, remain incessantly exiting, without being annoying.

"Gizmo", the only composition by the tricky pianist, connects the angularity of the free thinker Thelonious Monk with the grace of almost classical Swing, and next to the intimate ending "Samsara", the very lightly arranged "Second Thoughts" with its blank spaces is a highlight, which adds the proverbial something extra ... but let's stop with the clichés in this text, they won't do justice to this thoroughly fresh album.

Conclusion: An often exiting, sometimes pleasantly digressive um ... up and down of the idiom jazz and at the same time ideally just that: Reto Suhner and his three friends live this very freedom, which Coltrane, Mingus, Miles and Ornette once meant – just here and now.

Andreas Schiffmann, musikreviews 4.3.2016

Let's go to Switzerland! Where jazz seems to be alive, and new impulse is given. Supported by the cultural funding of the canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden, these four musicians have presented a further album, „easy“, isn't it? Well, they are still young, Reto Suhner, born in 1974, Philip Henzi, born in 1977, Silvan Jeger, born in 1985 and Dominic Egli, born in 1976. They all have a well-grounded training and have already played with several other musicians.

The four musicians achieve a very dense and harmonic atmosphere, which mainly is situated in quiet realms. And thus, the music flows in this very mood, without lacking tension. Because what is offered within each of the pieces is very divisive, be it due to short rhythm changes, accelerating the tempo or spontaneous ideas, which are expressed through accomplished improvisations.

Here cool jazz is swinging, every now and then there is a surprise, for example, when "Das menschliche Moment (The human Momentum) / Illusions III: Colour" begins with a wonderfully out-of-tune piano. It is good that way; when jazz is not only academic and sterile, but also has a sound sense of humour and - as it seems to be in this case - has a lot of human warmth. The music hovers sometimes, one finds oneself to hover a little with it and to let one's mind wander. Often these thoughts are interrupted by spontaneous ideas, which seem to develop themselves out of the singular pieces run. As in the before named piece, a sound suddenly comes out of my loud speakers, which brings me back to the times when Miles Davis brought a little rock into jazz; I speak of "Bitches Brew". One starts to wonder whether this spontaneous „planning“ is part of the concept; I love things like that, especially, when it is presented as it is on this record.

I do not want to highlight one of the musicians' names particularly, as the four of them together form a swaying unity; still the tender and warm sound of the saxophonist's playing is especially appealing to me.

Wolfgang Giese, Musik an sich 3.1.2016

Beautiful title blue with a typographic sculpture „Easy“, elates the listener, when inserting the CD. Light footed the music unfolds and plays on in a relaxed manner. A strong sense for jazz is palpable, traditions are being absorbed and reinterpreted according to the contemporary feel. Everything that happens has at the same time edges and flow, which – between composed and free parts – fuel each other gently.

The band is well rehearsed, the group dynamic strives for balance and renewal; there is no hurry to pretend cleverness. Structures are important, fluctuating themes are taken like hurdles, over which one can hover or break through. In "Alles" ("Everything") Suhner has combined a section by Coltrane with odd beat. "Second Thoughts" developed out of an exercise with one of Suhner's rarely played minor scales. "Gizmo", composed by the pianist Philip Henzi, which with lyrical tinges boldly crosses the unorthodox mainstream. "Easy", no doubt, has a hinge of this lightness, with which one arms oneself for today, in order to keep warm in this music-business-stress. At the same time it is the idea of the moment or of

coincidence, which according to Suhner plays an important role in the music of this quartet. That is what keeps the music easy, even under its surface.

Pirmin Bossart, Jazz'n'More 2.4.16

Easy

The saxophonist Reto Suhner, from the eastern parts of Switzerland, is a composer with a clear vision. Still, his music often sounds as if it was just invented; the interplay of the musicians of his quartet seems so easy and open. Whether its soundscapes with an out-of-tune piano, an harmonic exalted piece of jazz or free interplay: There is always an air of naturalness, for something that does not come out of the blue. Reto Suhner's flutes and clarinets sound movingly beautiful. Kulturtipp, Beat Blaser, SRF 2 Kultur 3.12.15

Where the unexpected is happening

There is something you can be sure of, when listening to the saxophonist Reto Suhner: An evening with him is always a good evening.

You can never feel safe with Reto Suhner. Just when you want to lean back, it is very likely that something unexpected happens: a change of mood is sneaking up, a sudden danger, a drum thunderstorm or a shimmer from concrete to abstract jazz. He knows how to entertain his audience, how he can manoeuvre them from a familiar frame to a strange world of experience. Nothing happens "heave ho", Reto Suhner is not above impressing his audience with subtle noblesse, only to tow it in the next moment with a few movements into the abyss. In Suhner's vita, there are no messages of spectacular co-operations with international cats from the jazz scene. A few workshops with people like Jerry Bergonzi, Bela Lakatos or Julio Barreto. He stayed in New York for half a year. That's that. The saxophonist from Herisau preferred to refine the expression of his own bands. With the Reto Suhner quartet, he has recorded six albums and established an international reputation. It is the nuclear ensemble of the saxophonist. At his side the piano wunderkind from Berne, Philip Henzi, who right after his studies at the Swiss Jazz School in Bern stayed on as a teacher. There is the stylistic agile bass player Silvan Jeger and the still playful Dominic Egli on drums. "Every evening is different", says Reto Suhner revering to his work, and the jazz community agrees upon this: every evening with Reto Suhner is a good evening.

Ane Hebeisen, Der Bund 7/2015

Freedom – Responsibility – Trust

Easy? Depending on how one looks at it! Reto Suhner definitively did not switch to easy listening jazz! But there are long sections on the new album of his quartet, which present themselves immensely light footed; an enthusiastic listener cannot but feel that the band grooves on the floor and floats in the clouds at the same time.

Easy? Depending on how one looks at it! This agile, wide awake, but anything but streamlined interplay of this half a decade existing band is the result of a process consciously encouraged by Reto Suhner; a process with which two goals are being pursued. On the one hand, a flexible group dynamic with various possibilities for spontaneous interactions is being pursued. On the other hand, compositions and improvisations are not strictly separated from each other, but they are assimilated – e.g. by opening up spaces within a written piece or by «instant composing». Suhner says: «The idea of the moment or coincidences play an important role.»

Easy? Depending on how one looks at it! Suhner (saxophone), Philip Henzi (keys), Silvan Jeger (bass) and Dominic Egli (drums); these four musicians are not misled by the paradox of jazz, but are inspired by it: Jazz is most perfect when it does not aspire to be perfect, but is open to error and handles it creatively.

After all it is valid to ask: If in jazz, it is even possible to make mistakes. Monk said: «Wrong is right.» And Suhner asks an important question: «If music were a reflection of society or of life and if music can transport „felt time“ (Steffen Schorn), how perfect can/ should/ has to be music in that case?» Suhner & co. are no hard-boiled «jazz managers», but «jazz philosophers» and «jazz adventurers». They are a team, which emphasises individual freedom, while each of them carries equal responsibility. This balancing act is only possible with mutual trust.

Easy? Depending on how one looks at it! The quartet extemporises on the basis of compositions, which deviate more or less from the standard model (and because a studio recording is not a concert, there are some overdub tasty titbits). The ballad «Portrait of Jennie», which is the title melody of a Hollywood movie from 1948 and which Suhner has equipped with new harmonies, appears to be the most ordinary track. In his compositions Suhner operates with completely different gimmicks. That «Alles» develops a knock-on effect reminding of Coltrane, is not a coincidence, as it is a combination of «Coltrane Changes» («26-2») with odd- time signatures. «Second Thoughts» evolved from an exercise with minor scales, which Suhner does not use often: Challenging his listening habits, he finds fresh solutions. In «Illusion: Colour», a pulse is dissected in different time signatures. But more important than explaining the functioning of pieces of music is realising that one does not have to know what is happening to recognize that the Reto Suhner Quartet produces music in an unorthodox, yet organic way. For people, who love the jazz tradition but also love to be surprised, this quartet is the perfect match: They are moving forward, but do not forget to look in the rear-vision mirror every now and then.

PS Reto Suhner also likes books. The titles «Die Schlafende Acht» (The Sleeping Eight) and «Das Menschliche Moment» (The Human Momentum) are borrowed from books by the Swiss writer Hans Boesch (1926-2003). With the novels «Der Sog» (The Slipstream), «Der Bann» (The Spell), «Der Kreis» (The Circle) and «Schweben» (Hovering) Boesch created an important tetralogy of novels.

Tom Gsteiger 29/1/14

In Basel

The sublimely expressive saxophonist Reto Suhner ranks amongst the most distinguished "Jazz-fluidifiers" in this country. The musician, who was born in Herisau, and his band mates - Philip Henzi (Piano), Silvan Jeger (Bass), Dominic Egli (Drums) - clairaudient and quick-witted, create a musical flow full of associations. The quartet is - sometimes more, sometimes less concrete - geared to the composted material. For their latest CD «Bird's Eye» all band members, but Silvan Jeger, have contributed original pieces. In addition, there is a short, but artistic version of the standard «I'll Remember April». The album was recorded in October 2013 in Basel. Reto Suhner Quartet, «Bird's Eye», Live Life 2014008

Tom Gsteiger, St.Galler Tagblatt (daily paper of St.Gallen) 10/03/14

Bird's Eye

On this available live-recording from the „Bird's Eye“ in Basel, leader Reto Suhner is accompanied by his colleagues from the Swiss Jazz Orchestra Philip Henzi at the Piano, Silvan Jeger at the bass and Dominic Egli at the drums. Except the standard "I'll Remember April", all pieces are composed by the band members, one by Egli, one by Henzi and three by Suhner. All of these pieces have a somehow sketchy character; they serve as a starting point for the musicians' explorations, which occasionally are quite extensive. Thus time is needed; accordingly the pieces take five to ten minutes. The exception, which proves the rule, is "I'll Remember April": The classical tune is with its two and a half minutes notably shorter than the rest. Also the character of the song differs from the other tunes: the ballade is presented as a concise miniature; every note is consciously placed. In comparison, the five other pieces seems like rough sketches, which on the other hand offer a lot more space for free development.

George Modestin, Jazz'n'More 01/10/13

Four Virtuosi

Bird's Eye Reto Suhner Quartet

The saxophonist Reto Suhner, who studied at the Jazz school by tutor Carlo Schöb, plays in different Swiss and international bands. With original compositions and an intense sense of community, the Reto Suhner Quartet presents a homogenous sound. Their broad spectrum of different moods, beginning with meditateness and turning into expressiveness, convinces the audience.

Special: Live-recording at the concert at the Bird's Eye.

Basler Zeitung 03/09/12

Swiss Jazz at its Best at the Nudel26

Virtuous lines, partially at the borderline of tonality, alternate with percussive sections, in which the musicians explore the acoustic spectrum. There are groovy, capturing rhythms, which often abandon the usual, "straight" bar lines. They don't shy away from harmonic experiments. The quartet, founded by the saxophonist Reto Suhner, convinced the audience with an extensive set of unconventional Jazz in the personal atmosphere of the Nudel26. Even though there were familiar time signatures, and major and minor seventh cords, one could be sure that the next dive into dissonant harmonies

combined with rhythmic complexities would eventually come. In these moments the quarete's joy of performance seemingly knew no limits. Melody lines were interrupted by individually places notes, which often functioned as the entrance to purely percussive music. Then, the contra bass was quickly converted into a percussion instrument, which entered into a dialogue with the drums. The further extension of the rhythmic complexity let the audience wonder whether the rhythmic order was still in tact or if it was already dissolved. Only by listening to the walking bass and the grooves, the audience could regain orientation. The title "The Sleeping Eight" reveals Suhner's fondness for toying with rhythm. The musicians' joy of exploring sound spheres was well perceptible. Reto Suhner repeatedly let his soli from tonal scales, to expanded scales and onto free tonality, until his instrument finally produced squeaking noises. Meanwhile the contra bass player Silvan Jeger rushed at dizzying speed from the lowest to the highest pitches. Dominic Egli made use of his whole instrument. The band succeeded

in contrasting the high density of the soli with calm and slow sections, in which the Piano – played by Philip Henzi – was most effective. Catchy melodies created a tranquil feeling.

Lorenz Jaeger, Schaffhauser Nachrichten 29/04/11

Reto Suhner is solidly rooted in jazz tradition. With great matter of course, the 37- year old Swiss saxophonist masters different styles. He distinguishes himself by his unique sensorium for the emotional temperature and the dynamic fever curves of this music style. On his new album «Run», he and his quartet prove that their aestheticism is not restricted to traditionalism. In his eight original compositions (a further one is by Dominik Burkhalter), Suhner leads his band through elaborated arrangements which are very original in terms of sound and rhythm. Suhner seems to be inspired by diverse sources (from classic to M-Base). But his influences never seem alien to him; he has absorbed them. Suhner leaves plenty of room for individual solo contributions by his colleagues - Lester Menezes at the piano, Fabian Gisler at the bass and Dominik Burkhalter at the drums. Still, the soli are subordinate to the alternation of the interplay, as well as to the compositional arc. This also shows in the tracks, in which Suhner supplements the quartet with a string trio – Tobias Preisig (v), Marion Namestnik (v), Daniel Pezotti (vcl). The tonal spectrum expands naturally as if one would open a subtly painted fan.

Ueli Bernays, NZZ 21.4.11

Journey into the Unknown

The alto saxophonist Reto Suhner starts with a new crew. Between the albums „Born in Herisau“(2001) and „Live in Schaffhausen“ (2008), the quartet of the alto saxophonist Reto Suhner went through a wondrous metamorphosis. A solid modern-jazz-band turned into an adventurous, unpredictable interplay-ensemble, which creates a sound oscillating between restless tranquillity and mysterious fen fires. Looking back, Suhner says: “This was a very important experience for me.”

Erosion and a New Beginning

“Run” is the swan song of a fantastic group: A third of the nine numbers feature elegiac string sounds.

In addition to Suhner, Lester Menezes (piano), Fabian Gisler (bass) and Dominik Burkhalter (drums), elegiac string sounds are on a third of the nine numbers. This special sound emphasises the prevailing parting mood. After adding brass on the album “Äbä” (2007), Suhner was keen to use another additional acoustic colour this time. “Run” was recorded two years ago. Everything was still all right at that time, but then the erosion process started, which Suhner – who is nothing like an autocratic band- leader – describes as follows: “There were no problems in terms of music, but it did not work anymore on a personal level – somehow everyone had a different plan for the band.” And thus, it came as it had to: After a time span of ten years Suhner stopped work.

The Adventure Continues

Together with the pianist Philip Henzi, the bass player Silvan Jeger and the drummer Dominic Egli, the alto saxophonist from Appenzell has formed a new quartet. But these musicians are not a mere backup-crew. “My new fellow musicians all play their instruments very different from their predecessors. Even though we do not have new repertoire yet, I have to react to new things. I consider this as an enrichment,” says Suhner. They do not know where their journey may take them: Instead of devising clever concepts, Suhner enjoys his role as a catalyst, which initiates interactive processes. The adventure continues.

Tom Gsteiger, Der kleine Bund 18.3.11

Birds in the Wind

Jazz is Communication.

If the musical result of an encounter is meant to be interesting, then the musicians need to be able to listen to each other, react to each other, be in constant exchange and to move forward together. It is obvious, that this is easiest achieved with long-time friends. It is apparent that the saxophonist Reto Suhner (from the Eastern part of Switzerland) plays with the same bunch of musicians since his debut album eleven years ago. “Run” is the name of Suhner’s CD; “Fly” would maybe be more appropriate; flying not in a swarm, but in utter freedom, loosened from each other and at the same time in unison, that is how Suhner and his colleagues fly through their pieces. The music is dense and intensive, but never cluttered or rushed, cleverly built, but never overly intellectual. Carried by the wonderful sound of Reto Suhner’s saxophone. A great pleasure!

Beat Blaser, Aargauer Zeitung 01.03.11

Harmonious and Surprising

Flawless jazz, beautiful sound, concise composition: With his latest CD, the alto saxophonist Reto Suhner (from the Eastern part of Switzerland) shows his class. In the meantime he recruited new musicians for his quartet. It is a short CD in terms of time, only 33 minutes, but the intense is its effect on the listener’s head and heart. The furious opening piece “Run”

reminds of the fire of good jazz, but that is only one side of Suhner's music. The other side is a fine, ballad-like and lyrical sound, which is especially apparent when a string trio plays with the quartet: Tobias Preisig (v), Marion Namestnik (v) and Daniel Pezzotti (vc) open up the space and transform the jazz-riot into a peaceful chamber music.

Acoustic Colour

"Run" is the fifth record, that I have made with this quartet." I wanted to use a new acoustic colour," comments Reto Suhner on this development. He also wanted to try out the colour of the string sound in terms of composition. Within the twelve years of its existence, the quartet grew together so much, that the interplay has become more and more somnambulist; the boundaries between composition and improvisation have become porous and undetectable. So the use of a string trio has also been a challenge to break the bands routines and to add contours to their sound. On the other hand, after the last Live-CD Suhner was in the mood of trying out shorter pieces. The last album was a live recording from the Jazzfestival Schaffhausen; it provided long arcs of suspense, in which the interplay of the quartet unfolded in all facets imaginable.

Orchestra Experience

In the last few years Reto Suhner (36), a quiet worker and a man of few words, has gained respect in the scene. Born in Herisau, he graduated jazz school. In addition, he took tuition in classical traverse flute and workshops with Jerry Bergonzi, Art Lande, Ed Neumeister or Julio Barreto. In 1999 he went to New York for tuition with Dick Oatts, Billy Drewes, Rich Perry and Bob Mover. In 1998 and 2007, he received an award from the cultural foundation of the canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden. The alto saxophonist has gained a lot of experience by playing with the Adrian Frey Septett, Herbie Kopf, Pius Baschnagel's Influences, Manuel Mengis Gruppe 6, the Christoph Stiefel Trio or Harald Härter. He is a sought-after musician, who today plays in the Zurich Jazz Orchestra, the Swiss Jazz Orchestra, Lauer Large and the Martin Streule Jazz Orchestra. He is also regularly on tour with Mats-Up.

New Quartet

Besides playing as a sideman, Suhner also fostered his own band. For twelve years his quartet, consisting of Reto Suhner (as), Lester Menezes (p), Fabian Gisler (b) and Dominik Burkhalter (dr) played together. But last summer, Suhner set the course for a new beginning. He staffed his quartet with new members: Philip Henzi (p), Silvan Jeger (b) und Dominic Egli (dr). „Musically it still worked, but there were problems on a personal level. Different ideas collided." This change places Suhner in an odd situation: he has a new CD, recorded by his former quartet, but now he has new band members. That does not make it easier to organise gigs. Reto Suhner takes it easy. "Of course, there are things which are more difficult now. But anyway, I think it is great as it is right now." A new band focuses in a different way on writing songs, and thus allows you to go new ways unburdened.

Form / No-Form

Suhner describes one of his musical characteristics as "extremely harmony oriented". That is why besides jazz, he listens to certain kinds of classic. At the same time music needs to be surprising. Besides harmony and surprising moments, it is the transitions, which appeal to him. "The mix of form vs. no- form, composition vs. improvisation, but also the transitions from one style to another, or different simultaneities in time- play have always interested me the most." There is no shortage of ideas

with this saxophonist, as he has proved in October 2010 during his "Artist- in- Residence" evenings at the Moods. For example, he performed with a nonet for the first time, for which he also composes. "I enjoyed this evening. I would like to pursue this project."

Pirmin Bossart, Jazz'n'More 15.10.10

The Weightless Blues of the Saxophonist Reto Suhner

At the end of the set Reto Suhner impishly announced the next piece, which he simply called "Blues". This laconic quality suits Suhner well. Born in Herisau in 1974, the saxophonist is not a man of many words. During his concert with his quartet East/West on Tuesday he confined himself to a minimum. "Adios Machos" is the title of a song, another is called "Symathisanten", and then there is "Blues". But this blues, Suhner plays, is surprising and it mocks clichés: It is twisted and full of cool intelligence. Both saxophonists – besides Suhner, there is the saxophonist Nicolas Masson from Geneva – with their swift legato lines remind of the music from the albums that were recorded by Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh. That Suhner calls his piece "Blues", while it is demanding, is typical for him: No boasting, the saxophonist might have thought, who is known in the Swiss jazz scene as a modest man and an impressive musician. The contrabass player Patrice Moret and the drummer Dejan Terzic are rhythmically strong – but both seemed self-centred and showed little inspired reaction to the brass. Nicolas Masson came across as a little bland. And thus it is entirely Reto Suhner's evening. He plays his alto saxophone in deep ranges, sometimes round; he is in control of the finest shades of sound, he moulds and forms the sound. When he climbs high, it is deeply touching, and the sound becomes airy, almost like an oboe. Suhner combines lightness with smoothness and sensibility. With him, even blues becomes weightless.

Christoph Merki, Tages Anzeiger