

VIDEO CRITIQUE

You may not know **JEFF SCHLANGER**'s name but if you're a fan of any of the artists who came out of New York's legendary Loft Jazz movement of the '70's you probably have some of his work. Schlanger is a painter and sculptor who has been visually chronicling the New York musicians since 1976, painting them as they perform live, and a lot of his work has made it onto cover art for CDs and albums by the likes of Julius Hemphill, Oliver Lake, William Parker, Billy Bang, and the World Saxophone Quartet. In my own collection I have his work on the covers of the WSQ's *Live At The Brooklyn Academy Of Music*, Bang's *Live At Carlos 1*, and Parker's *Compassion Seizes Bed-Stuy*. His work is very recognizable with the musicians lightly sketched in and lines, dots, and circles of color bursting from their horns in a visual representation of their music making.

SPIRITWORLD (Witnessimo 2007) is a DVD record of Schlanger at work and coincidentally a film of a damn fine concert. The concert took place on April 8, 2005 at the CUE Art Foundation in New York City during an exhibition of Schlanger's work. It had four heavyweight musicians (William Parker, perc, b, flt; Himalayan horn, shakuhachi; Oluyemi Thomas, bcl, flt, musette, perc; Joe McPhee, ss; Lisa Sokolov, vcl.) performing as Schlanger sat to one side and painted them.

The music starts ceremoniously with Thomas walking slowly down a corridor playing bass clarinet while Parker follows him blowing a huge Himalayan horn. They walk to a corner of the gallery where Joe McPhee stands cradling his soprano sax and their other instruments are set up. The men exchange long low and high notes for a while. Then you notice a human voice seeping into the mix and the camera cuts to Lisa Sokolov standing in the audience and singing along with the others as if in a trance. It continues from there with the four interacting in solo, duo, trio and quartet formations led by Parker's deft use of bowls, bells, and other percussion. All the while Schlanger sits at the side daubing paint onto his canvas with both hands and creating a visual fireworks display that matches the sonic fireworks going on.

The music, in two untitled sections dedicated to Raphe Malik and Robert Creeley, is very powerful whether it's a poignant sax and voice duet, screaming flutes, delicate percussion, or the wailing group climax where Parker plucks out a gritty bass beat, the horns wail and Sokolov growls and scats on top like Ella Fitzgerald. Schlanger's finished painting is displayed in the DVD pamphlet and it captures the messy, bustling iridescent beauty of this music.

The DVD also contains a half hour interview with Schlanger talking about his work and his memories of the Loft days and a still gallery of his art. This is highly recommended both for the music itself and the insight into a very important chronicler of this work.

Jerome Wilson