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Record Label Profiles

Diatribе Recordings: Heart and Soul of the Music



By **IAN PATTERSON**, Published: January 16, 2013

Whilst Ireland has long produced music of world renown, this tiny, most Westerly European nation has never been quite so famous for producing cutting edge jazz. However, as European jazz has gradually let slip the American accent—an evolution that perhaps gathered its greatest momentum with the birth of the ECM label—so, too, in Ireland, a new generation of musicians are venturing into increasingly more fertile grounds.

One independent label that is cutting a fearless swathe through the choppy waters of conservatism and indifference is Diatribе Records, which promotes some of Ireland's most creative musicians—native and immigrant alike. Formed in Dublin in 1999, the labels first tentative steps were two techno 12" vinyls, long since deleted. Diatribе's first CD wasn't released until eight years later, a concept album of jazz musicians battling machine overlords entitled *ZoiD Versus the Jazz Musicians of Ireland Vol 1* (2007). The concept, the title and the graffiti-like artwork probably consigned the music to underground status from the get-go, but the electro-acoustic modern jazz experiment said much about the label's disregard for convention and underlined its commitment to forward-looking, creative music.

Since that first release, a dozen more CDs have followed and numerous digital releases, covering a wide range of styles that encompass modern jazz, electronic music, and a range of hard-to-categorize, highly personal forays into free improvisation and experimentation. The range and breadth of the music is impressive, from pianist [Francesco Turrisi](#)'s baroque-influenced trio jazz to bass guitarist [Simon Jermyn](#)'s contemporary experiment in sound; from Izumi Kimura's electrifying contemporary solo piano improvisations to the brilliant contemporary jazz of trio White Rocket and quartet ReDivIDeR; and from the aforementioned electro-acoustic *ZoiD* and the folk-flavored, jazz-classical melting pot that is Yurodny to Diatribе's latest

addition to the stable, Thought-Fox, an original quintet featuring the divine voice of improvising vocalist [Lauren Kinsella & Alex Huber](#).

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Profile

Diatribes Records is run by Daniel Jacobson, Mathew Jacobson and Nick Roth, and as Roth explains, money is not the motivating factor driving the label: "If you want to make money go and work in a bank, or better go and work in a Treasury. Treasuries make money, record labels burn money. A couple of the records on the catalog have paid back what it cost to make them but in general they don't and I don't want to try to force them to ever do that because ultimately you just end up compromising."

Listening to any of the CDs released on Diatribes Records and the common denominator is precisely the uncompromising nature of the music. Uncompromising that is to say, in the artists' vision, for alongside a natural commitment to improvisation and exploration there is also great beauty and lyricism in much of the music. And the music comes above all other considerations: "My principle," Roth explains, "has been to follow the music. Make it happen and deal with the consequences afterwards. I never consider the ramifications of what it's going to cost. As a result I never have any money. I never have any money but I have loads of music."

There's no recklessness about Diatribes Records, however. All three Directors record music that they like and believe in, and judging by the arresting artwork and packaging of the CDs the commitment to the artistic aesthetic is complete. The costs of such a labor of love, however, are taken into account, as Roth expands: "As a business we need to think about these things and take them into consideration but not to the extent where they affect our principles or musical decisions."

Roth came on board Diatribes Records through Yurodny, the nine-piece group he founded in 2007. Yurodny's music embraces Irish traditional elements, as well as Balkan, Arabic and Mediterranean rhythms and colors and its live shows have an intoxicating power and beauty. Roth was producing Yurodny's first CD at Diatribes Records and he simply stayed on afterwards, becoming a partner in the adventure.

In times of single track downloads, shuffling playlists and ever-decreasing attention spans, Diatribes's philosophy on producing records is refreshing, even if it seems to go against the grain, as Roth explains: "To make a great record you have to think about the studio and the sculpting of the sound. One thing which I think is still important is that you have to imagine a record for those one or two listeners who will sit down and play the record from beginning to end. You have to imagine the journey as a symphony with various movements."

Diatribes Records has the wind in its sails and there are, Roth explains, currently another ten CDs in production. Roth is excited about this new batch of imminent releases: "All of them are better than the ones we've done to date," he says without the slightest hint of hyperbole. One of these forthcoming releases is by a group called Water Project, which utilizes the sounds of water and electronics to produce music. The inspiration came from listening to the sounds of water Roth's toilet made: "It's human music. You can hear in this where rhythm comes from; you can hear African rhythms, very primal rhythmic language. It was a big lesson," Roth acknowledges. "Music is not just made by humans; it's actually our way of understanding the world around us. That chaos, which is in nature, in the sounds of water dripping, which is in the sound of fire, which is in the sound of birds, that kind of chaos is what's interesting about human music and it's what's interesting about improvised music in those moments when it all

goes a bit weird and nobody can really understand. Those are moments when we reach a deeper part within ourselves, more reactive to the environment and less thought-based."

The Water Project illustrates Diatribe Record's open-mindedness when it comes to creativity. Another release that Roth is excited about is the next CD from RedivIDeR, featuring his brother, guitarist Alex Roth, cellist [Benjy Davis](#) of Basquiat Strings, trumpeter Alex Bonney from Loop Collective and pianist [Kit Downes](#) of Emiracle and Troyka fame. 2013 promises to be a tremendously exciting one for Diatribe Records and for all those interested in progressive, creative music, in Ireland and beyond.

Capsule Reviews



Zoidan Jankalovich

ZoID versus the Jazz Musicians of Ireland: Vol 1

[Diatribе Recordings](#)

2007

Diatribе founder, guitarist and electronic musician Daniel Jacobson—credited as Zoidan Jankalovich—creates an arresting meeting between electronic grooves that inhabit a space between dance and chill-out, and conventional jazz idiom. Some of Ireland's best jazz musicians, including guitarist [Tommy Halferty](#), bassist [Ronan Guilfoyle](#), drummer [Sean Carpio](#), pianist Greg Fenton and tenor saxophonist Michael Buckley embrace Jacobson's personal, futuristic-sounding, jazz-electronic hybrid in a series of intimate dialogues.. With the exception of the trio number "Zuth," all the tracks are duo collaborations, yet despite the broad conformity of set-up, Jacobson's sonic canvas is surprisingly large. Acoustic, electric and electronic instruments combine in intimate, edgy dialogue that shifts between sci-fi abstraction and more earth-bound ambient grooves.

Francesco Turrisi

Si Dolce e il Tormento

[Diatribе Recordings](#)

2009

Turin-born Francesco Turrisi has been something of a breath of fresh air on the Irish music



scene since arriving on the emerald isle in 2006. In a short time he has earned a reputation as an excellent jazz pianist, percussionist and accordionist; an original voice. He can be found playing in the ebullient Balkan-flavored Yurodny, or Zahr, a group which explores the reach and influence of Arabic music, and Tarab, a group which blends traditional Irish folk music with a cornucopia of Mediterranean flavors.

This trio's debut recording is heavily influenced by Turrisi's years as harpsichordist in l'Arpeggiata, Christina Pluhar's much lauded early music ensemble. His passion for the music of centuries gone by is entwined with his personality as a jazz pianist and the result is an arresting and consistently beautiful work.

The album title translates as "sweet is the storm" though, apart from one [Cecil Taylor](#)-like assault on the keys, the music is for the most part gently alluring and soothing, with a current of melancholy uniting the pieces. The overall feeling generated is akin to the state induced by contemplating falling rain from the comfort of indoors, with just the occasional rumble of thunder and flash of lightening in the music to quicken the pulse. [Click here to continue reading...](#)



Yurodny

Evenset

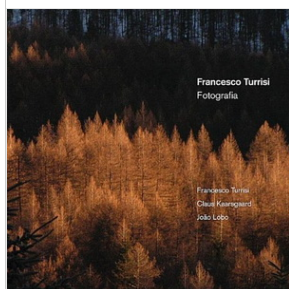
Diatribе Recordings

2009

Yurodny isn't your typical funerals-and-wedding-party Balkan big-band. For starters, it's made up of Irish traditional musicians, a Russian violinist, an English saxophonist, and an Italian accordionist who doubles on Arabic percussion. Nevertheless, when this nonet lets rip it's a match for anything Goran Bregovic could conjure. The infectious grooves, tight unison playing and searing violin of Oleg Ponomarev on tracks like "Balkantown" and "Red Hora" are exhilarating, but in the main the music is more about mood and combinations of sounds than freewheeling virtuosity. Half a dozen guest musicians—including saxophonist [Gilad Atzmon](#), here on clarinet—contribute a variety of textures.

The lyrical introspection of the title track and pianist Francesco Turrisi's alternatively beautiful and tortured lament "Folia" are elegant statements of a meditative nature. "Griffmadar (Rantott Kolbaszos)," with its potent mix of jazz abstraction and poignant strings occupies modern classical terrain, as does the stripped down, cello-led "Mahazor (The Absolute and Four Ages)." "Crude Black Strap" is a hushed dialog between saxophone and strings with a faint undercurrent of electronic rustling. The ghostly strings of "Scrub Systems" have an otherworldly, hypnotic quality.

Evenset is surely one of the most significant releases to come out of Ireland in decades. The coming together of jazz, classical and eastern traditions is hauntingly and seamlessly realized.



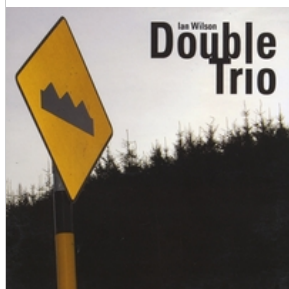
Francesco Turrisi

Fotografia

Diatribе Recordings

2011

It would be simplistic to call pianist Francesco Turrisi an experimenter, though his music embraces myriad cultural influences, from his native Italy through the length and breadth of the Mediterranean, straddling the centuries, and imbibing from sources as diverse as baroque, Moorish airs and jazz; simplistic, because his music flows as naturally as a river follows its bed—it is in Turrisi and of him, and it guides him. As on Turrisi's memorable debut *Si Dolce e il Tormento* (Diatribе, 2009), there is no sense of striving to fuse, no sense of painstaking construction; on *Fotografia*, there is instead, a very natural sounding confluence of ideas and emotions. Though *Fotografia* shares the same neo-classical, folk-tinged, fringes-of-jazz adventurism of Turrisi's debut, it's a darker, more impressionistic offering, and seemingly more conceptual as a whole. Inspired by the Italian tradition of encouraging children to sketch *pensierini*—little thoughts—Turrisi creates sonic edifices around various themes, sympathetically and intuitively supported by drummer João Lobo and acoustic bassist Claus Kaarsgaard. The titles—"I Am The Shadow Man," "Remorse," "A Thousand Pieces," "Ants," "Towards the Depths"—are suggestive of the sometimes somber impressionism in these vignettes, though lyricism of aching beauty lies embedded throughout *Fotografia*. [Click here to continue reading...](#)



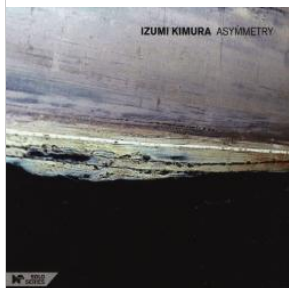
Ian Wilson
Double Trio
[Diatribе Recordings](#)
 2009

Ian Wilson's compositions are musical notations based on speech patterns of residents of Glencullen, who reflect upon change in the area. These notations are given musical form by three jazz and three classical musicians. Snippets of these interviews illustrate the relationship between the flow and cadences of speech and the music represented here. There's a fair amount of improvisation from saxophonist Cathal Roche, drummer Stu Ritchie and bassist Daniel Bodwell, particularly on the most overtly jazz pieces, "The Stonemason" and "The Reverend," but the line between composed and improvised lines is sometimes tantalizingly uncertain.

Violinist Mia cooper, vibraphonist Richard O'Donnell and harpist Cliona Doris are equal partners in this endlessly colorful tapestry. The boppish fluidity of O'Donnell's solo on "Catherine" reflects the flow of interviewee Catherine's rising-falling voice. There's an air of sophistication about "The Hostelery Manager," which ebbs and flows between jazz trio intimacy and classical chamber music, though with a slightly uncompromising tone. "The Forest Manager" is serene, almost meditative and features a fine solo from Roche.

By contrast, "The Convenience Store Owner" bounces along with cheery optimism— suggested by bass and drums—while violin and saxophone engage in light-hearted, yet engaging dialog. "The Residents" stems from a reflection on a better past, and the weak rhythmic pulse and minimalist vibraphones combine to create a dreamy nostalgia. Complaints about changes in the area usher in surer rhythm and an edgier feel in the melodic development.

Though conceptually simple, there's great sophistication in the interweaving lines of the jazz and classical idioms. It's almost impossible not to put music to the voices of those around you after listening to Wilson's compositions, which is perhaps his greatest achievement.



Izumi Kimura
Asymetry
[Diatribе Recordings](#)
 2010

Japanese pianist Izumi Kimura is drawn to both classical and jazz music, though her preference is clearly contemporary. These 22 solo piano pieces are interpretations of works by three Irish and four Japanese composers. What connects [Ronan Guilfoyle](#), Greg Caffrey, Gerald Barry, Takashi Yoshimatsu, Toshinao Sato, Akira Miyoshi and Mamoru Fujieda is the eclecticism, both in their influences and their very broad compositional fields. Thematically diverse, the compositions draw inspiration from 1970s funk, tango, and jigs, tea plantations, death and decay, opera, childhood nostalgia, images of the sea, humoristic children's literature, an 18th century castrato, plant language and West African drum music.

Izumi tackles the lot with breathtaking technical assurance, tremendous rhythmic stamina and above all a feel for the soul of each piece, though only Guilfoyle's four pieces were written for,

or with Kimura in mind. Yet, in exploring this vast technical and emotional terrain Kimura leaves her personal mark every step of the way. Recorded in St. Peter's Church Drogheda, the wonderful acoustics contribute much to Kimura's stunning interpretations. Essential listening, not only for piano devotees, but for anyone passionate about contemporary music.



Simon Jermyn

Hymni

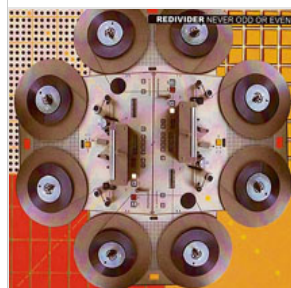
[Diatrobe Recordings](#)

2010

Bassist, guitarist and sound sculptor, Simon Jermyn's debut recording, *Trot a Mouse* (Fresh Sound, New Talent, 2009), served notice of an original talent, one more concerned with creating sounds than indulging in extended solos. That's not to say that improvisation isn't part of Jermyn's bag, as [Morla](#), the duo he co-leads with Sean Og demonstrates. *Hymni* is a solo effort, and the result of several days locked in a studio surrounded by a variety of instruments. Layering bass as well as guitar and manipulating their sounds, Jermyn creates moody ambience that runs from dense drone to quite lyrical whispers.

The suite-like continuity to the ten pieces rewards uninterrupted listening. Gentle bass pulse, prepared-string guitar, distorted—though curiously melodic—bow and wind chime-like percussion combine majestically on the title track, a reworked Finnish hymn. Dissonance and melody are juxtaposed on "There Were Nine I Think," which evokes the atmospheric minimalism of some of guitarist [Bill Frisell](#)'s more abstract works. Real beauty inhabits "Inanimate" and "Green," though the haunting quality common to both are of very different natures. The marimba miniature "Cogs" contrast with the sheets of sound sci-fi of "Gallery." The simple, meditative "Circles" possesses its own hypnotic beauty.

There's boldness and strength in the simplicity of Jermyn's compositions and much more besides to admire in this quietly captivating music.



RediVideR

Never Odd or Even

[Diatrobe Recordings](#)

2011

RediVideR was born in 2007, when drummer [Matthew Jacobson](#) gathered some of Ireland's finest creative musicians to give voice to his compositions. Its debut, recorded live, has an undeniably visceral impact. Jacobson's compositions are like fine sketches around which the musicians add their own bold colors, seeking collective form and harmony. Improvisation of a post-modern and thoroughly urban bent is at the root of the music. Eschewing chords and conventional jazz rhythms, RediVideR references the broad aesthetic of innovators like alto saxophonists [Ornette Coleman](#) and [Steve Coleman](#). But it's also highly disciplined, and embraces hooks, melody and quite refined harmony and counterpoint. This is free jazz which grooves and sings.

Jacobson's fractured, shifting time meters mingle with punchy brass and bass riffs on "Riot Peace." Alto saxophonist Nick Roth—a mainstay of progressive Dublin bands Tarab and Yurodny—tears the paint off the walls with searing playing, while bassist Derek Whyte and trombonist Colm O'Hara's grooves rumble underneath. Peace breaks out in a strangely meditative, subdued passage, before the riot kicks off again, with squonking sax and rattling drums. It's the freest track, and yet there are plenty of signposts to follow, in particular the repetitive bass patterns which anchor the group. [Click to continue reading...](#)