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"I can't imagine a
world without
this music"

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Cole**
Bop To The
Future

**Avishai
Cohen**
Sound Matters!

"I just wore
out that
record"

**John
Scofield**
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Groove runners in bloom

Bristol-based improv duo **Run Logan Run** have just released a new album and with collaborations and gigs planned, are raring to go. **Tony Benjamin** spoke to them

It is hardly surprising that Run Logan Run's new album *For A Brief Moment We Could Smell The Flowers* seems to mark a change in sound. After all, the Bristol-based improvisational duo had recently undergone a 50 per cent change in personnel with founder member saxophonist Andrew Neil Hayes recruiting Matt Brown just a few months before recording the album in January 2020. Already the driving rhythm force behind half-a-dozen well respected jazz outfits, including the fully improvisational Modulus III and veteran free jazzer Tony Orrell's twin-drummer outfit Big Top, Brown arrived with impeccable credentials. Going into the studio with producer/bass player Riaan Vosloo, however, proved a more radical experience than the pair had expected. "It was quite a shift in my head," admits Hayes. "Previously I had just thought 'right, let's capture what we do live' but then I realized

that actually we could do something completely different with the recording."

In embracing the studio as an instrument, they empowered Vosloo and Ninja Tunes producer Dilip Harris to enrich the sound with electronic embellishments, adding extra power and breadth to their soundscape, happily without losing the essential rough-hewn grit and drive for which their live shows are rightly celebrated. Hayes is essentially happy with the difference, saying: "I like the idea that the record is nothing like the live show. They're two different mediums. I know that might upset some people but I don't think that matters – you just got to do what you got to do."

That stance comes as no surprise to anyone who has watched the saxophonist's progress as a jazz outsider over the years. Having arbitrarily picked the instrument to learn at school he insists he never listened

to any jazz for his first five years of playing, being more interested in heavy metal.

Discovering John Coltrane, however, was a revelation that led to Archie Shepp and beyond, and moving to Bristol to study, he applied himself to the local jazz scene where his fresh-face brashness earned him the nickname Schoolboy. During this period, inspired by his discovery of Canadian saxophonist Colin Stetson, he determined to master the art of circular breathing, something which took two years and remains an important element of his playing style. Bristol-born Matt Brown had also begun performing in his schooldays and the power and precision of his drumming led to a reputation that eventually made him one of the cities most go-to musicians. Unusually among their generation of successful jazz players neither of the duo has ever had any formal jazz training, nor feels the lack of it.

Indeed, Brown even thinks academic study can mislead some players in their development: "Of course you can learn the language that way but the mistake is to think you're done when actually you're just at the start. It's the step after that that really matters - what are you going to do with the language?"

Given the band's well-established identity for hard-driven electro-acoustic grooving what clearly matters most is that Run Logan Run's core protagonists share a common language. It is generally agreed that, while Brown's arrival heralded a change, the essential qualities of the band's sound remain as crowd pleasing as ever. For Hayes it meant letting go a bit and approaching things anew, while for Brown the answer was to simply plunge in: "Me and Andy started improvising straight away and that felt incredibly organic. I don't know if easy is the right word - we're challenging each other, too - but it feels natural. Improvising is the right fit so we're sticking to 'improvise first, refine it later.'" Hayes agrees: "Improvising in a duo is like a sparring match and that's what I enjoy about it. It may not sound like it but all our music comes from improvisation, whether in the studio or on our own. When you

improvise it's like fishing - every now and then you catch a big one!"

Of course, improvisation implies the unexpected and any discussion of the band's future direction immediately highlights unpredictability. Having harnessed a range of collaborators for their online lockdown streaming concerts, including electro-saxophonist Lara Jones and pianist Matthew Bourne, they are keen to build on those relationships and others. For the album launch party in Bristol guitarist Dan Messore joined them, adding a rocky edge that hinted at Hayes' early metal fandom, while the encore added vocalist and bass player Annie Gardiner for a couple of post-punk songs. Hayes has also indicated that

future albums may well take consciously different directions, the only consistent thing being that they will always derive from improvisation. It seems the pair have generated a shared artistic mission based on spontaneity and they are happy to explore that potential. "For me, I feel I'm allowed to be 100 per cent honest in the way I feel in every moment" Brown explains. "I'm not having to hold anything back. It's a very open space to explore with Andy." His bandmate agrees: "I think it's anything goes as long as you do it like you mean it. That's what's important to me."

Or, in other words, expect the unexpected.



Run Logan Run

For A Brief Moment We Could Smell The Flowers

Worm Disc WDSCS7CD (CD) ★★★★★

Andrew Neil Hayes (ts/elec), Matt Brown (d, perc), Riaan Vosloo (el b, syn, v). Rec. date not stated



Lockdown proved a useful regrouping space for duo Run Logan Run after original member Andrew Neil Hayes recruited new drummer Matt Brown in

late 2019. The enforced hiatus enabled some intense jamming and a series of livestreamed gigs with like-minded collaborators, including bass player/producer Riaan Vosloo. The outcome, as showcased by this album, is a tighter musical vision and a powerful contemporary sound. The music's architecture clearly derives from dance music culture but, this doesn't mean a remorseless groove fest. From the Kemet-like fanfare opening of 'Screaming With The Lights On' through to the scattershot coda of closing number 'Wise Man Eames' the mood shifts from track to track, encompassing mellower melodies ('Moving With Speed') and free jazz disjunctures ('It's About Ice Cream') as well as the more familiar post-Baroque arpeggios of 'Give Me Back My Slippers'. Stylistic commonalities outweigh the diversities, however, with each number typified by a series of sax motifs, abrupt prog-like gear shifts and timely disruptions of the dynamics. Throughout Vosloo's contribution as sound designer adds, variously, drum & bass synth, subliminal drones or evocative sound washes. While it adds up to a bigger production sound than previous RLR recordings, paradoxically it somehow more accurately reflects the often visceral impact of their live performances – many songs here are surely destined to become onstage favourites. **Tony Benjamin**

