

Monsieur Dubois – Ruff (2006)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Das Banck*
2. *Bowlin'*
3. *Spy's Metaphor*
4. *Monsieur Dubois S'Amuse*
5. *Dreaming* [play](#)
6. *Mutiball*
7. *Da Heazz*
8. *G.T.R.*
9. *I.D. #1*
10. *Rue Danemark*
11. *Killer Herman + Hidden Track*

Personnel: Bart Wirtz: saxophone and effects; Dirk Beets: trumpet and effects; Maarten Meddens: Fender Rhodes piano; Kasper Kalf: double bass; Udo Demandt: percussion; Rudi Sanders: drums.

Up until now, Monsieur Dubois has been a strictly European live phenomenon, and apparently a popular one. The Dutch downtempo/club jazz group has played all over the continent since 1999, but never once laid down an album. So to the extent the Euro scene has an American equivalent, this full-length debut ought to penetrate nicely on the other side of the pond, or wherever it ends up. (It should do just fine on home turf.)

The packaging doesn't offer much by way of information, but thankfully the group's web site does. The six members all play real instruments (sax, trumpet, Fender Rhodes, bass, drums and percussion) and know how to improvise, but they apply a firm rule to composition (a synonym for production in the electronic world): every track has to be danceable, or at the least mindfully groovy. Thankfully the lineup includes both a drummer and a percussionist, so the beats usually have considerable texture.

Ruff is not the swinging jazz your parents listened to, nor is it a slick, saccharine smooth jazz copout. The secret is the message in the upper right corner of the cover—a bird motif and the words "danceable hardjazz." And for what it's worth, that's about as good a description as one can give this music. It's definitely harder than soft, which is a big advantage when it comes to

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durability.

The electronic music scene is overripe with cute self-descriptions, and you could come up with a different pidgin neologism for each of these tracks. The drum-n-bass oriented opener could be called "junglejazz" (yes, those horns are definitely improvising). The giddy, wah-wahed third track? "Shaffunk." Track five? "Disco airportlounge." Track eight? "Thrashflute." You get the idea. It's sort of like the name of the group, which has a cute story behind it. Inspect the text under the aluminum to learn the big secret, or spoil it in advance by looking at the online version.

Yes, this is some ruff stuff. Are you tuff enough? ---Nils Jacobson, allaboutjazz.com

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