



**Exercises in Futility**  
Marc Ribot  
(Tzadik)

by Kurt Gottschalk



**Technicolor**  
Giovanni Maier  
(Long Song)

A humble line might be drawn from Bach's *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier* through John Zorn's *The Book of Heads* to Marc Ribot's *Exercises in Futility*. All are essentially sets of exercises meant to highlight certain techniques. And while several players have tackled Zorn's knotty *Book of Heads*, Ribot is probably the most known, having recorded it for Tzadik. (The work was written for Eugene Chadbourne, who has since recorded it for the label, but it remains unreleased.)

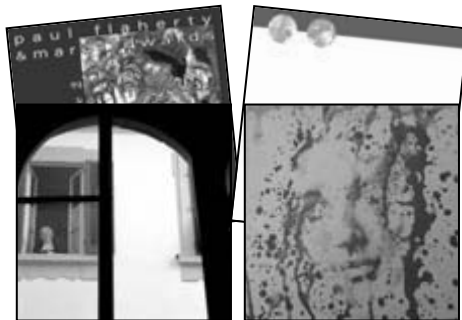
*The Well-Tempered Klavier* was written as an instruction book for learning the piano, with the pieces getting progressively harder. Zorn's *Book* is less forgiving, starting at levels darn near impossible. And Ribot's *Exercises in Futility* methodically unfolds to unpack his own idiosyncratic playing. Over the course of 14 brief tracks (with an added 10-minute solo piece at the end), Ribot puts his unusual virtuosity in a petri dish, muting strings, thwapping the guitar body and generally dissecting what it is that makes him so in demand. It's quite different from his manic recording of the *Book of Heads*, though, working at the same time as a pleasant recital, rather than the enjoyably frantic

*Book of Heads*.

While there's no guarantee that mastering the *Exercises in Futility* will put the aspiring guitarist in a position to air-drop into any situation with finesse and aplomb, Italian bassist Giovanni Maier's *Technicolor* is a good indication of Ribot's ability to do just that. Whether playing with Zorn, Tom Waits, Elvis Costello, Marianne Faithfull or Henry Grimes, he is immediately distinctive, always fitting his voice into the new context. With Maier's electric quartet, Ribot shows how to weave searing rock leads and bits of skronk into an instrumental prog setting. The two-disc set (Ribot only appears on the first) tends toward the display of speed and precision that proggers love, falling somewhere between the King Crimson and Frank Zappa camps and shows nice variations in composition. Maier isn't afraid of using some ambient noise and the band is spot on, with Ribot often dissolving into the mix and rising up again.

Alongside his own work, Ribot has made himself into the rare session player who can stand out in any crowd, hired to just be himself. By instruction and example, these discs show how he got there.

For more information, visit [tzadik.com](http://tzadik.com) and [longsongrecords.com](http://longsongrecords.com). Ribot is at Abrons Arts Center Sep. 13th with KOTKOT. See calendar.



**Kaivalya #2**  
Paul Flaherty/Marc Edwards (Cadence Jazz)  
*Bridge Out!*

Paul Flaherty/Randall Colbourne (Family Vineyard)  
*Simitu* Cold Bleak Heat (Family Vineyard)  
*In The Midst of Chaos* Orange (De Stijl)  
by Jeff Stockton

With his long white beard and fiercely uncompromising attitude, alto/tenor saxophonist Paul Flaherty comes across as a typical New England eccentric and is stubbornly devoted to playing free, offering featherweight whispers to the deepest guttural roar and everything in between.

On many of his past recordings, Flaherty has been paired in a duo with a simpatico drummer: initially Randall Colbourne and more recently Chris Corsano. In October of 2003, Flaherty went into the studio with Marc Edwards, a self-described power drummer. True to form, the tracks on *Kaivalya Vol. #2* are long and neither player ever lets up. Edwards' touch is enveloping and insistent as he creates hypnotically persistent rhythms that meet Flaherty's fury head on. This is cloudy music infused with an unexpected but welcome warmth to temper the firestorm.

On *Bridge Out!*, a reunion of sorts for Flaherty and Colbourne, the improvisations are less frenetic and more exploratory as the pair builds a spatial intimacy that may have resulted from the basement studio that hosted this session (Flaherty calls it the smallest he'd ever imagined). Close proximity lets these players glide and shift with the graceful suddenness of a flock of birds and as much as these improvisations might exhaust the listener, it's easy and gratifying to get the sense of being a part of a labor of love.

*Simitu* is the second release from Cold Bleak Heat, comprised of Paul Flaherty and drummer Chris

Corsano along with bassist Matt Heyner and trumpeter Greg Kelley. This band, however, is more than an impenetrable, braying collective. It does sound bigger than its four pieces, but the instruments match and complement each other's sonorities in textural, nuanced ways. There is a melancholy undercurrent to their continuous searching as trumpet and saxes bleat, bowed bass squeaks in unison with the sax and Corsano kicks with the force of a mule's hindquarters. On the somberly beautiful "A White Bandaged Head in the Shadow of Death", the band weeps, wails and moans, flashing on moments of lyricism that are soon obliterated in what amounts to a raging hymn.

30 years ago, Paul Flaherty got together with some other western Connecticut misfits to play and record as the group Orange. One LP (pressed in a quantity of 200) came from the experience and *In the Midst of Chaos* presents four young idealists pulling, for the most part, in four different directions. Trained electric guitarist Barry Greika wanted a conventional jazz band. Flaherty wanted nothing else but to play freely, with electric bassist Bob Laramie and red-haired drummer Hobbit coming down somewhere in the middle. Flaherty ratchets the bluster down a notch, more influenced by The Son (Pharoah Sanders) at this stage than The Holy Ghost (Albert Ayler), shaking bells and vocalizing here and there and much of the program is given over to the electric stylings of Greika and Laramie. But while neighboring New Hampshire may have had dibs on it, this CD marked the point in time when four musicians made their case for a new Connecticut state motto: Play Free or Die.

For more information, visit [cadencejazzrecords.com](http://cadencejazzrecords.com), [family-vineyard.com](http://family-vineyard.com) and [destijlrecs.com](http://destijlrecs.com). Flaherty is at The Delancey Sep. 22nd. See calendar.

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