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Peter Brotzmann electrifies Densités experimental music fest

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The vibrant state of today's avant-garde scene was proven at this year's Densités International Festival in Fresnes-en-Woer, France, that ran from 23-25 October. Its programme featured a strong hand for the Brits among a wide range of experimental music, dance, poetry and sound art. First up from our shores was former AMM pianist **John Tilbury**. His performance carried a distinctive romanticism that demonstrated an elegant harmonic minimalism and a seemingly innate understanding of space, while the incomparable **Phil Minton**'s duet with French vocalist **Isabelle Duthoit** caught attention for its conversational effect and theatricality. Other highlights included **Sophie Agnel**'s trio, in which various electronic drones and sound warps supplemented her manipulation of the piano's internal organs and gothic chordal voicings. However, if anything justified the description "density" it was Norwegian noise-rock trio **Jazamer**, who delivered a relentlessly brutal and intense set.

Coming straight from the apex of experimental art was the **Hairy Bones** quartet, featuring the iconic **Peter Brotzmann** on saxophones, **Toshinori Kondo** on trumpet and electronics, **Paal Nilssen-Love** on drums and **Massimo Pupillo** on bass. With sensitivity in communication, each simultaneously shaped the music with charisma, belligerence and power. Nilssen-Love's tumultuous rhythmic patterns thrived on strong rock grooves while retaining a freedom of expression equal to the likes of **Sunny Murray**. Additionally, Brotzmann demonstrated a capacity to carry melodic lines with a warmth evocative of **Coleman Hawkins**. In conversation with **Jazzwise** after his set Brotzmann explained that "You have to fight, that's what life is about." This was a characteristic true of all the music at Densités. Each musician had their own voice for the fight - so long may such festivals provide a platform for them to speak out.

Joseph Kassman-Tod

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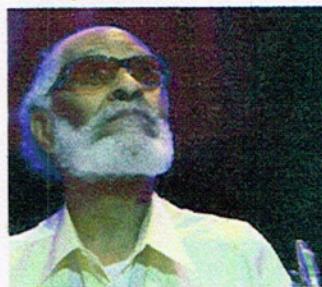
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