

# SHIPP / LEHN / BUTCHER

John Butcher [UK] • soprano- & tenor saxophone, feedback

Thomas Lehn [AT/DE] • analogue synthesizer

Matthew Shipp [USA] • piano

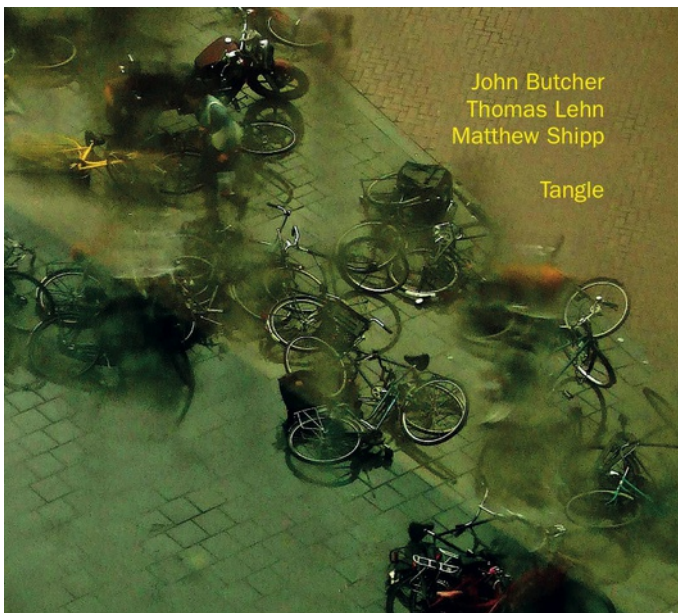


© painting by Gina Southgate @ Konfrontationen 2016

The combination of personalities is winningly combustible. The rhythmic push and pull between Butcher, Shipp and Lehn is a delight, with all three conjuring up graciously dissonant figures whose frequent crisscrossing gives the music a kaleidoscopic character. All of the players are drumming with razor sharp focus, but they also have more serene impulses and create glistening soundscapes in which the analogue keyboard is well complemented by the two acoustic instruments that are inspired to match the strange and beautiful noise that fills the air. Music with an on-the-edge intensity that is nonetheless handled with considerable rigour and attention to detail.

- Kevin Le Gendre | Jazzwise Magazine | Feb 2017

## CD release



## Tangle

label: Fataka

cat.-no.: fataka 14

release date: November 17, 2016

<https://f-a-t-a-k-a.bandcamp.com/album/tangle>

1. - 3.	Cluster	37:09
4.	Tiefenschärfe	5:59

recorded on February 19th 2014  
at Cafe Oto, London

cover photo by Andy Moor

liner notes by Nate Wooley

"Tangle is the standout album of 2016 in my book, across the board.

The ideas are flowing thick and fast, with everyone at the top of their game and perfectly in sync. There's a raw vitality to the performance, and the music is unabashed and direct in channeling relatively conventional lyricism.

This is thrilling, peerless stuff, played with vivacity and animation. I was at the concert, and in my diary I jotted down a rare post-gig note that reads simply "!!!! f\*\*\*\*\*k", but I'd forgotten it was quite this good."

- Tim Owen | Dalston Sound | Nov. 30th, 2016



February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014 at Cafe Oto London © unkown

## webinfo

[www.johnbutcher.org.uk](http://www.johnbutcher.org.uk)

[www.thomaslehn.com](http://www.thomaslehn.com)

[www.matthewshipp.com](http://www.matthewshipp.com)



## reviews (excerpts)

**salt peanuts** | by Eyal Hareuveni | April 9, 2017

"This is a magical journey in sounds, ideas and textures, featuring three sonic visionaries. [...] The dynamics between these strong-minded musicians are immediate and organic, but their interplay also stresses their individual approaches. All three negotiate imaginative ideas, expressed in lightning speed and mesmerizing subtlety, playing with great focus to detail and structure, but at the same time busy exploring their own sound universes. This constant-complex play of touching and going charges and colors this meeting with tension and reserved drama."

**The Free Jazz Collective** | February 26, 2017

"The trio of saxophonist John Butcher, pianist Matthew Shipp, and analog synthesizer player Thomas Lehn deliver powerful and unique music on 'Tangle'. [...] The chemistry of Butcher, Shipp and Lehn is apparent and with the analog synthesizer, their music is a truly refreshing."

**Dusted Magazine** | by Bill Meyer

"[...] This music does not tell a tale of dominance and submission, but one of three strong personalities bound within a tangle of knowledge and unknowing. [...] The music on Tangle stands apart from what all parties have made before, but makes sense of their individual and collective histories at the same time that it sounds unique unto itself."

**Point of Departure** | Ezz-thetics | by Stuart Broomer

"[...] What is remarkable about Tangle is that it isn't exactly a "tangle": the distinctions in the musicians' approaches instead invite a kind of independence of listening [...] in which we follow parts singly, in pairs and as three [...]. The experience is then all the more remarkable when there is evidently intentional interaction among the parts. We're invited to a benevolent conception of time in which it is conceived as both static and dynamic, both still and moving, like time experienced as two places at once. The final brief track is called "Tiefenschärfe" ("depth of field"), the title suggesting just how we might approach this remarkable music.[...]"

**All About Jazz** | by John Eyles

"[...] The first three tracks, together entitled "Cluster," play seamlessly as one continuous piece which takes up the lion's share of the album, with the six-minute "Tiefenschärfe" rounding it off. [...] The end result is a model of trio improvisation in that all three seem constantly aware of the others' playing [...]. Changes of mood or tempo do not happen at the behest of any one player but evolve organically from the playing of all three. The music is at its most thrilling when all three are playing full-on together — but even then, it never becomes, um, tangled. Just as impressive are the more measured, ensemble passages. If, as we must hope, this trio records together again, they should not name the group after this album!"

**Avant Music News** | by Mike Borella | September 4, 2016

"[...] Tangle documents a 43-minute set recorded live at London's Cafe Oto in February of 2014. What is unexpected, if not remarkable, about this recording, are the roles played by Shipp and Butcher. [...] Shipp reins in his outside leanings and takes on a more staid approach. [...] Butcher provides his intellectual take on sax blowing, employing extended techniques and controlled chaos when appropriate [...] Lehn is a perfect counterpart to the two instrumentalists, as his modernism fills the spaces that the other two create. [...] Tangle is aptly-titled. This is a dense, reflective piece that will take the listener some time to unpack. To use an appropriate cliché, Fataka has captured lightning in a bottle with this release."

**The Attic** | by Scorio

"There isn't really a sonic history for that combination."

## Liner notes | by Nate Wooley

"It seems very simple", I said to my van-mates, "there's a spectrum between accretion of raw ideas and refining a very specific language." The thought coalesced as we careened through red lights in a rented van in downtown Detroit. During a short period of my life this was not necessarily an unusual situation for discussion—it became my preferred social energy for thinking, in fact. In a nutshell, I was saying that, as musicians, we swing between the addition of new ideas and the act of whittling down those ideas into some sort of elegant language. We vacillate between the two according to need: sometimes feeling dissatisfied with the building blocks we have been using to construct musical statements and wanting to add something—anything—as long as it's different; then feeling dissatisfied with the raw state of our new ideas and wanting to perfect them technically and understand their place in our musical aesthetic.

I went on to say that some people work closer to one end of the spectrum or the other, even though they still go through the same process of acquiring and editing. "Give me an example", said the driver/percussionist, taking us to the organ trio bar for off-night drinks. "Well, for example, John Butcher. He is very refined. He has a specific language and it is all about the elegance and rigor of how he uses it." "Okay, and the other side?" he said as he pulled into a parking spot. "Matthew Shipp. Not that he's raw, but you get the feeling that the newness of the thing is the most important, over the need for editing those ideas down to their essence." The van-mates, cellist and percussionist, nod and we promise to take up the conversation again once we are out of the club and back in the van.

And, we do. And, I do with others. This idea comes up over and over again and the examples change to suit the listener. Sometimes I defend, other times I'm met with yawns of agreement. Over the years, I have had different relationships with this idea, as I have taught it to students, fleshed it out in arguments, or thought it through again to occupy my mind during subway delays. Recently, however, I've felt that if this is all there is, then I've reached a depressing kind of stasis—a place where improvised music is simply a Marcusian A/B seeking the ever elusive C—the truly new—outside the system. I have become trapped within my own thought cycle.

But now I am faced with this recording. It is the C. It is the something surprising that, if not rewriting my van ride theory, renews my energy for it.

John Butcher continues to refine. He continues to be elegant, rigorous, and profound in the way that he uses his instrument to converse using his individual syntax. His playing on this recording, however, is wild in turns. While still being rooted in a precise attention to timbre, it quite simply shreds with a certain abandon that feels slightly unhinged at points, and in a way that makes you so happy you are there to experience it.

Matthew Shipp is still a fount of ideas. He continues to be an unfettered conduit of gestures, shards of melodies, and full-blown sonic assault. But he is putting his lightning in pristine bottles and stacking them into designs we've never attributed to him before. There is an obvious sense of architecture in Shipp's playing here that is shocking in its ability to structure the way we perceive the trio improvisations.

And, yes, it is a trio. Shipp and Butcher are the A and B in my theoretical dyad. They represent two opposed ways of thinking that, luckily for the listener, meld beautifully, especially when they play against character. This leaves a very important space open for Mr. Lehn, the C. It is a rare pleasure to hear someone so in tune with a group's dynamics that she or he can forgo the parts for the whole and create from a distant place: not transcendent or confrontational, just . . . indescribable. Lehn is this element, and his synth colorings of the saxophone and piano and the subtlety of even his most aggressive electronic statements create certain aural-historical connections to psychedelia and 60s electronic experimentation via Stockhausen and the Columbia-Princeton Center.

These connections are made without being eye-wink referential, however, and that is the power of these improvisations from all three players. Shipp's manic repetitions, Butcher's scalar blankets, and Lehn's warm reverb remind the listener of certain eras of experimental improvisation and composition, but it isn't the remembrance that contains the power, but the feeling that this is something fresh and new. It is a music that brings up new ideas and paradigms, thought through and shared as I did, after my first listening, by immediately calling my old van-mates.