



## Gerry Hemingway Quintet *Double Blues Crossing*

BETWEEN THE LINES 71202

★★★★½

## Gerry Hemingway Quartet *The Whimbler*

CLEAN FEED 040

★★★★

*Double Blues Crossing* and *The Whimbler* provide two angles on the world of drummer Gerry Hemingway, a 30-year veteran of the creative music wars.

*Double Blues Crossing* features a new edition of Hemingway's European Quintet of the '90s — trombonist Wolter Wierbos is the link, while clarinetist and alto saxophonist Frank Gratkowski, cellist Amit Sen and bassist Kermit Driscoll replace Michael Moore, Ernst Reijssiger and Mark Dresser, respectively. In interpreting Hemingway's gnarly charts, this set of tonal personalities eschews the extravagantly individualistic push-and-pull that was the habit of the predecessor unit, but are equally effective.

The centerpiece is a half-hour suite, a 1993 experimental chamber jazz work with hillbilly titles that belie the highbrow content of the score. Samples, loops, delays and electronic sounds function as motific pivots and launching points for a series of evocative, theme-and-variation soundscapes that deploy blues language in a decontextualized, non-idiomatic manner. In the AACM post-Webern vein is "Nighttown/Tent," on which Hemingway's marimba progresses leisurely through a series of skillfully delineated events. Counterstating the highbrow aura are "Rallier," a post-Ornette Coleman stomp, and the polyphony-rich "Slowly Rising," on which trombone and clarinet state high-life melodies over synchronous cello and bass vamps.

Polyphony and groove dominate *The Whimbler*, excellently recorded by Michael Brorby. Hemingway applies lessons learned about pianoless quartet strategies during his 1983-'91 tenure with Anthony Braxton. Friends since New Haven, Conn., days in the '70s, Hemingway and bassist Mark Helias carve out buoyant freebop, shuffle, high-life and reggae

beats, the drummer designing the rhythm in his "Nude Descending The Staircase" style over the rock-steady basslines. Abetting the dialogue are tenor saxophonist Ellery Eskelin and trumpeter Herb Robertson, team players who listen closely and weave extended techniques into cogent narrative flow with almost nonchalant ease. In line with Hemingway's predilection for tailgate trombonists like Ray Anderson and Wierbos, Robertson extracts striking melodies from an astonishing range of crisply articulated tonal shadings at all tempos with mutes, valves and tongue.

—Ted Panken

**Double Blues Crossing:** a.: Buddy Luccett's Dream By The Dry Grass, Part 1; b.: Where The Once Never Blues; Buddy Luccett's Dream By The Dry Grass, Part 2; Don't Melt Away; It Ain't Slippery But It's Wet; Joe Cracklin Left This Before The River Got Him; Rallier; Night Town/Tent; Slowly Rising. (59:00)

**Personnel:** Gerry Hemingway, drums; Frank Gratkowski, clarinet, bass clarinet, alto saxophone; Wolter Wierbos, trombone; Amit Sen, cello; Kermit Driscoll, acoustic and electric bass.

» **Ordering info:** [challenge.nl](http://challenge.nl)

**The Whimbler:** Waitin'; Rallier; The Current Underneath; Pumbum; The Whimbler; Spektiv; Curlycue; In The Distance; Kimkwella. (65:21)

**Personnel:** Gerry Hemingway, drums; Ellery Eskelin, tenor saxophone; Herb Robertson, trumpet; Mark Helias, acoustic and electric bass.

» **Ordering info:** [cleanfeed-records.com](http://cleanfeed-records.com)

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