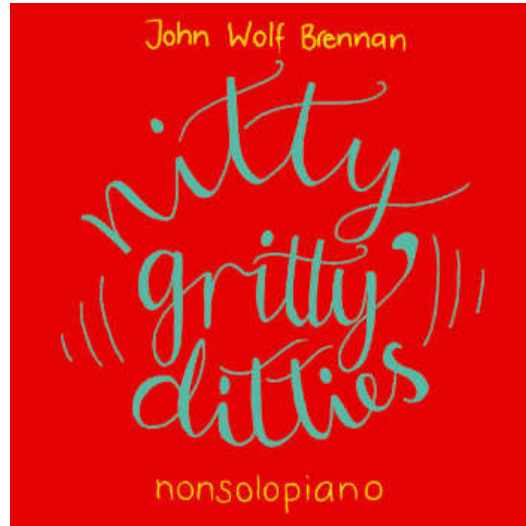




«JazzViews», London/UK, May 2021



JOHN WOLF BRENNAN - Nitty Gritty Ditties
Leo Records CD LR 902

John Wolf Brennan, pianos and voice; Anna Murphy, voice on tracks 6, 27, 30
Recorded at Soundfarm Studios, Obernau/Lucerne October-December 2020

Pianist Brennan was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1954, moving with his parents to Switzerland in 1961. He has been known internationally as composer, improviser, organist and pianist for many years, performing across Europe, Canada, China, Japan, Russia and the USA.

This album consists of 33 short pieces, ditties or songs, which have originated from other musicians as diverse as Béla Bartók, Carla Bley and Tom Waits. It also carries a kind of subtitle, 'nonsolopiano' which the comprehensive sleeve notes explain, along with the music itself, in full detail. Brennan accompanies himself on Hammond, melodica, Rhodes, toy and Wurlitzer pianos to name a few. On three tracks he is accompanied by vocalist Anna Murphy.

Classical, folk, jazz and rock are all represented on the album, yet together they may very well be seen as a short concert of chamber music, composed for a small group of musicians to play in the home.

Track 16 offers one very clear example of how many of these numbers work. I use it because the piece to which Brennan has referred is probably very common to the listening experience of a very wide jazz audience. So, you will recognise it. It is Blue in Green from the Miles Davis album, Kind of Blue. Clearly, the pianos have nothing of the muted tones of Miles' trumpet, yet Brennan presents the essence of the original, clearly identifiable: I don't think these are mondegreens.

John Wolf Brennan presents a concert of over an hour of delightfully light-hearted jazz music, utterly relaxing and almost spellbinding. He is clearly engrossed in the music and approaches it fervently.

Reviewed by Ken Cheetham