

Nils Wogram Root 70  
*Luxury Habits*

Every era calls for its own music. All the same, a good album does not have to comment on the times to reflect upon them. With *Luxury Habits*, Nils Wogram's Band Root 70 gives our age precisely the soundtrack it needs.

Nils Wogram has never made a secret of the fact that for him life comes first and then music. The former is a cornucopia, from which his music always profits anew and which feeds him far beyond the jazz repository. The fact that he has been playing together with his band Root 70 for the past 17 years in an unchanged cast reveals that the personal and human are at least as important to him in his projects as the purely musical. And once again, the new album from Root 70 demonstrates how well this plan – which basically isn't one at all – works, how it expresses a healthy attitude toward life itself.

Times change, and with them, the themes and credo of all artists – as long as their antennas continue to receive signals. Even the first bars of the opener of *Luxury Habits* announce that Root 70 is moving differently. Indeed, the motto for the new CD could be "the party's over." Never before has the band sounded so serious. Although here, serious does not mean the cerebral tendency in some of contemporary jazz, but rather the seriousness with which a subject is exhibited, and the depth with which the intentions of four musicians merge. Indeed, the music on *Luxury Habits* did not even have a conceptual plan. On the contrary, unlike on the last records of Root 70, Wogram wanted to do in a space devoid of concepts what a jazz musician likes to do: to simply play. In this case, however, no concept can be an even stronger concept, or to say it in the words of Nils Wogram: "Concepts are fun and give me a lot. But they also restrict me. That is how concepts function. If you have been working conceptually for a long time, and you do not want to focus on a concept, you will see many things that you would not intentionally sum up as a concept." Here, it is not about slogan-like literal translations of topics that Wogram and his companions – Hayden Chisholm, Matt Penman and Jochen Rueckert – deal with. But, song titles such as "Party Anxiety," "Luxury Habits," "Rich Kid," "Flattery is the Strongest Weapon," "Starting from Zero," "Rehearsing the Future" read like subtle commentaries on the times and reveal a lot about the musicians' attitudes.

Wogram takes his time on his new record. A lot of time. Of course, time is a tremendously precious commodity, and yet the four musicians simply take this time, both to enjoy the sequence of prolonged moments available to them and to let the listener participate in this enjoyment. If you don't have time, you lose the ability to reflect, says Wogram, and then you don't have anything more to say, for the short or long term. In other words, seriousness is a synonym for a way of dealing with time very consciously. It is the antithesis of trying to measure something in, say, performance units. Indeed, it is about no less than dissolving time into individual and variable formal units of life in all its facets.

Wogram, Chisholm, Penman and Rueckert combine the gift of questioning themselves. Individually and as a band, which, in this case, amounts to a close circle of friends. "The album has emerged from a band dynamic," says Wogram. "We talked intensively about the concepts of the past few years and agreed that we wanted to take a little more risk. We needed a new challenge." The collective risk of precise blurring is a rare commodity in an epoch so fond of the post-factual. Root 70 lean far out the window. We have enough answers. Root 70 are four individualists who merge into an inseparable identity and once again ask the right questions in their music.