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The best new recordings from North America

Dresher

'Cage Machine'

Concerto for Violin and Electro-Acoustic

Band^a. Elapsed Time^b. In the Name(less)^c.

Din of Iniquity^d.

^{ab}David Abel *vn* ^cPaul Dresher

quadrachord, elec gtr ^eJoel Davel *marimba*

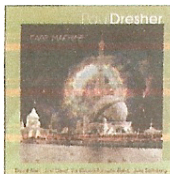
lumina ^fYuri Merzhevsky *quadrachord*

^bJulie Steinberg *pf* ^{ad}

Electro-Acoustic Band

New Albion © NA125 (75' • DDD • N)

**A musical eclectic finds
his invention un-Caged**



In these heady days of eclecticism, many composers scan a universe of styles for their music, but only a few have the ken to turn that multiplicity into true invention.

One certainly is Los Angeles-born Paul Dresher (b1951). He's adept at taking new technology and disparate influences, 'including contemporary classical, rock and roll, jazz and various world musics' (as he describes the range of his Electro-Acoustic Band), and crystallising them into brilliant originals.

These chamber works stem from 1994 to 2002, a period in which Dresher moved away from stage collaborations to focus on the instrumental realm. Plenty of drama remains, especially evident in the Concerto for Violin and Electro-Acoustic Band. A fresh essay in the genre, it pits the violinist against manipulated samples of John Cage's *Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano*. Samples from Cage's work rhythmically advance the concerto with a gritty and infectious texture in the first movement. In the second, a wistful solo by violinist David Abel and a haunting electric guitar solo by Dresher arise and then entwine with the Cage samples peppered about or in ostinato.

In the tradition of Partch and Harrison, Dresher also occasionally builds instruments. *In the Name(less)* is for quadrachord, with strings totalling 160 inches, and the marimba lumina, a midi controller. But its structured improvisation meanders disappointingly through six movements, though some are sonically splendid. Conversely, the backbeat-driven *Din of Iniquity* (played with verve by the band) and a marvellous piano-violin duo, *Elapsed Time*, find more balance of form and content. In the latter, pianist Julie

Steinberg and Abel skilfully mine harmonically rich (mixing octatonic and diatonic scales) and melodically splendid material. **Andrew Druckenbrod**