
Alex Paxton

Selected Reviews

"Alex Paxton's fascinating score impressed me from the very first moment. Without knowing the composer's name or background, the notes literally jumped out at me from the score; it was clear that this was a unique compositional voice, combining a complex, almost chaotic sensibility with a charming grounding in folk tradition."

- conductor Alan Gilbert, neue musikzeitung

"Fantastic delirium" - Tom Service BBC Radio 3, New Music Show

"Alex is an incredible trombone player as well as a phenomenal composer; one of the greatest trombone players in the world" - Josh Cirtina, BBC Music Magazine

"World Builder, Creature" – World Premiere – NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra conducted by Alan Gilbert, Elbphilharmonie Visions Festival, February 2025

"A world made of sky blue, snow white, crystalline sprinkled with sunshine-gold... Alex Paxton beckons us into his 'World Builder Creature'." - Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

"Unheard sounds... exciting distortions of time and space. Very clear and emotionally moving... life-filled momentum" - Die Welt

"jovial... playful, friendly, finely worked... bubbling sounds... world panorama... flaring and shimmering... everything was so beautifully colourful... a playground for the orchestra to let off steam." - Hamburger Abendblatt

"One of the highlights of the festival was the world premiere of Alex Paxton's 'World Builder, Creature'." – Klassikom

"Paxton can only be congratulated on the impressive premiere of his new work 'World Builder, Creature'. The composition focuses on human self-image and highlights facets of our 'human condition', making it both contemporary and timeless. In this sense, it contributed to a truly visionary opening of the Elbphilharmonie Visions festival" - Prof. Dr. Regina Back, Claussen-Simon Foundation

"How to eat your sexuality" – World Premiere – Klangforum Wien, Neue Vocalsolisten at the Eclat Festival, Stuttgart, February 2025

"composer and jazz trombonist, always dressed in parrot-colored clothing, presents himself openly as a strange counter-model to the cliché of the intellectual new music creator.... uninhibitedly sensual, manically forward-moving music that has no qualms about mixing jazz, pop and classical music and wild sounds from the worlds of film and computer games into a hot, bubbling brew.... Totally crazy and at the same time highly complex, cleverly done...like a Bruegelian hidden object picture: countless stories and details, the vulgar and the poetic add up to a monumental panorama...music thumps percussively, sounds like folk, flawless pop or film music... astonishingly intense and enjoyable..the most important work of this festival" - Regine Müller, Rondo Magazine

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"Scrunchy Touch Sweetly to Fall (Kite n Finger run)" - Ensemble Modern concert, July 2024

"British composer/improviser who'd wowed me at the Long Play festival in Brooklyn in May. His Scrunchy Touch Sweetly to Fall (Kite n Finger run) was vibrant! playful! Technicolor! ...enormous arpeggios in a cartoon ballet...wonderfully fresh." – Kurt Gottschalk, **Bachtrack**

Happy Music for Orchestra (Delphian Records – released April 2023)

"A Magician of Sound. classical-jazz sonic blasts ...violently overwhelming...I was seduced, and am not the only one ...digesting Louis Armstrong's Hot Five band recordings, John Zorn's Downtown experimentalism, Harrison Birtwistle's brash blocks of sound, music of the Celtic oral tradition, Hildegard von Bingen's medieval chants — and it all comes out, sometimes at once...carefully constructed ...forbiddingly dense it is balanced by its playfulness... hyperkinetic rainbow-hued... its joy and freedom." – **Financial Times**

"A candy store, which is so quite detailed excellent, so painted in all details. And then I had to think of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, the movie...also has such a clownish, actually sad undertone sometimes....I was really quite often moved while listening... Really very beautifully produced, because despite this overabundance and this insanely dense texture, it all remains audible through and you can really get into this space... And it's all about joy, happy music, joy. Not in clarity, balance, perfection and good taste, but in disorder, friction, imprecision and

excess...insanely precise perfection in this disorder is great, because the rhythms are so complex. I find it rhythmically totally interesting through these hetero rhythmic overlays...you actually never know what's coming. There is repetition, there are developments, you can sometimes read out something like motifs or themes, but actually it can all be over in the next moment and something completely different can come. You're always a bit up in the air and don't know what's going to happen." – **SWR Record Review show "New Sound Carries"**

"A raptors gurgling a cataract of catharsis, an album we can't get enough of here on the New Music Show... a pleasure garden of torrents and splashes" – **New Music Show BBC Radio 3**

"a manic, full-frontal, maximalist music, coming at you like a freshly-unleashed tiger, with an energy that is inspiring & exhausting...African water drumming, free jazz, Ligeti, Roobarb and Custard...brave pursuit of a self-made vision...seriously intoxicating music" – **The Arts Desk**

"dirty bubble- gum'...'Richard Strauss TikTok'... exuberant, virtuosic, at times beautiful, often impatient, energetic, juvenile, colourful, funny, messy, annoying &, yes, happy music... Textures and styles morph and meld with an astonishing speed across... cartoon music, math rock, movie music, free jazz, commercial jingles, cheerily little diatonic tunes...rococo of a hoarder's living room...dizzying and impressive... very contemporary: very very complicated emotions that are no less earnestly and strongly felt for it... like lying down on a couch completely exhausted but still scrolling on a smartphone... sheer super- abundance of novelty and thrill... hyper-virtuosic noodling...post-(post-post-post-)punk style... panying the flushing of a toilet... so much to enjoy in this music... extraordinarily vibrant and virtuosic playing from the Dreammusics Orchestra" – **Tempo Magazine**

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"listen & then listen again & again to the music...like opening a treasure box... multi layered treat... beautiful orchestral arrangements... almost perfect fusion between jazz & orchestral... noisy, fulsome and evocative... a cordial and mesmeric patchwork... the entire album is captivating... any improvised music lover presses "play" they will find it difficult to prise themselves away... fun eye-popping music... clever individual and very, very good... there is everything to love about this album." - **Platinum Mind**

"...some of the most genuinely extraordinary orchestral music you'll ever have the good fortune to experience... staggeringly happy... unstoppable, continue-at-all-costs need to sing. Melody is literally everywhere... exuberant kindred spirits letting rip with the simultaneous elegance and zeal of football supporters.... a demented dawn chorus... ultimate experience for the aural senses – it's undeniably a superabundance, yet it's also an unbelievable, glorious treat" - **5 against 4**

"It's brave to even attempt to put this composer into one box...the promise of utter enjoyment is high."
- **Classical Music Daily**

"an opportunity to revisit that early life carnival of sensation, to suspend the imperatives of orderly and goal-orientated progress and luxuriate in immediacy...wild imaginings...Paxton forges structures that miraculously hold together, while threatening constantly to burst apart from the sheer exuberance of his tempestuous orchestration...the orchestra seem to skip, hop or spin as the mood of the instant demands....melodic fragments flutter like incidental patterns forming across the brilliantly tinted surface of a swarming continuum....conceptually sophisticated as well as irrepressible in spirit." - **The Wire**

"if only one thing is listened to on this recording...then it must surely be the ingenious Hairy Pony Estampie by Alex Paxton. a seemingly impossible ten minute rollercoaster ride of sounds, including screamingly funny bombast, horse whinnying, vocals and such warm harmony...an exhilarating and thrilling ride". BBC music magazine Hairy Pony album review. "Playful entities... Over the course of numerous commissions and three studio albums Paxton's has stood in defiance of traditional stylistic boundaries...uncompromising intensity...central to Paxton's joyously maximalist aesthetic is an almost childlike innocence and playfulness present in so much of his work"
- **Van Magazine**

"Paxton will Make your ears ping... brings brightly coloured, loopy joy to our ears... sweet energy & frantic humour... It's jazzy & noisy and oddly serious." - **Fiona Maddocks, The Guardian**

"Sheer sensual sonic magic from Alex Paxton on that whole album... I just wish they (Dreammusic Orchestra) were sound tracking all of my slumbers." - **New Music Show BBC Radio 3**

"Chaotic, frenzied and maximised sensation is the order of the day for Alex Paxton's gloriously childlike...cartoonish world of blinding colour, elastic movement and warm humour... frenzied action...ecstatic surges and sudden lulls evoke a child gradually tiring themselves out with play...meticulous, finger-breaking arrangements. Paxton presents tension between raw, fleeting sensation and the restrictive geometry of adulthood...rich emotional expression...gorgeous, yearning melody...the difficulty of saying goodbye to a loved one is conveyed with moving realism. In focusing on raw sensation, Happy Music For Orchestra's cartoonish character proves a disarmingly naturalistic, powerful means of expressing real emotion." – **Quietus**

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"Car-Pig" (from Zubin Kanga's "Machine Dreams" on NMC Records - released 2023)

"Beauty comes in all shapes...genuine musical worth topped by the manic onslaught of Alex Paxton's Car-Pig"
- **The Times**

"Fantastic delirium...An effervescence of day glow energy that just can't be resisted" BBC 3 New Music Show, Tom service "sugar-sweet hyperpop-infused sounds break loose in a manic and overwhelming stream of consciousness"
- **All about Jazz**

"Relentlessly playful...a manic frenzy of sampled instruments careening like a demented merry-go-round on fast forward." - **The Wire Magazine**

"Paxton's full-throttle high-energy compositional style is totally unique...Imagine if the child of Frank Zappa & Bjork studied with John Zorn and then decided to do their own thing anyway...a vital, exciting and exceptional"
- **Florence Anderson, Planet Hugill**

Ernst von Siemens Composer Prize 2023

"Unbridled joy...sophisticated, passionate music full of pulsating energy and stylistic diversity." - **Jakob Böttcher**

Ilolli-pop (CD recording, nonclassical – released October 2022)

"Alex is a bloody phenomenal composer and visionary" Prxludes.net "of considerable interest to followers of contemporary Jazz...full of Changes of pace and mood..always great fun" - **London Jazz News**

"A rising star...unique and restless approach... His style shines through with the use of a roaring and bustling brass, restless strings, high-pitched buzz and an omnipresent sense of playfulness and easy-goingness... Even without using electronic means, he creates the sense of a crisp hyperpop-infused electronic sound...(Bye) is reminiscent of meeting someone special who you do not want to part ways with... Paxton's lovely and complex layering of sounds, reminiscent of the hectic, anxiety-ridden modern-day lifestyle, should remind us that, even in the midst of unreplied emails, unpaid bills, and a growing sense of loneliness in a more-than-ever interconnected world, it is still possible to find joy and feel alive." - **All About Jazz**

"fantastically bananas free-jazz-orchestra maximalism unmapped technicolour territory.... fantastical sound collages... like a cartoon rollercoaster... unfathomable glitching chaos... unique a vision as you might hear anywhere." - **The Quietus**

"absurdly colorful...delirious sound universe of Alex Paxton is a staggering experience, vaguely frightening, demanding and joyful at the same time: abundant, teeming, overflowing, luxuriant, it resembles these wanderings of nature in an accidentally and exceptionally favorable environment, so nourished that 'they escape any rule or constraint - not to mention the law of gravity.....a hair-raising disc." - **Crescendo Magazine**

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"Playful entities... Over the course of numerous commissions and three studio albums Paxton's has stood in defiance of traditional stylistic boundaries...uncompromising intensity...central to Paxton's joyously maximalist aesthetic is an almost childlike innocence and playfulness present in so much of his work" Van Magazine "wonderfully imaginative, manically energetic world of Alex Paxton, music that never seems to sit still, taking us on journeys across myriad brilliant textures and timbres...imaginative and madcap...terrific roller-coaster journey" - **Planet Hugill**

"a riotous, hot pink overabundance of love and rage" The Wire (Live Performance) "Paxton has become something of a go-to composer for adventurous modern classical, improvising and experimental groups...sugar-high toddlers on a speeded-up merry-go-round, tossing jelly tots to dancing revellers...clever, rambunctious and hugely playful second album" - **Jazz in Europe**

"One day, classical music could turn into this and in all honesty we hope so...decomposes, resembles, tears whole pieces, mistreats them, puts back together by making Beethoven coexist with Mingus...sonorous harlequin whose dress is not made up from rhombus but of various geometric figures...the sensations, smells, colours of what our lives could be if only we could emancipate ourselves from current conditions of Homo Economics and simply becoming Humanity: a wild race, stripped of convictions rigid teachings and guided visions of the world around us." - **Roots Music.it**

"whirling chases, where strings, brass, collages and percussion collide by pouring out billions of sound stars, drawing their origins from the history of music... ilolli-pop is a source of wonder, with its improbable crossings and its definitively singular approach, where experiments turn into explosive melodies clinging to our eardrums, seeking to unlock the secret of absolute music. Vital." - **Silence and Sound**

"Tentacle Flow...I think of circus trombones, jazz, noise, cartoon tunes, brass, slot machines, Walt Disney, Stravinsky, little creatures munching away. And all of this at a rapid pace. Your sound is funny. And pretty crazy. Where does this creative abundance come from?" - **Berner Kuluragena**

"playful and reveals in the juxtapositions of stylistic extremes, kind of like Glen Miller meets noise music." - **Micheal Schell flotation device KBCS radio**

"meticulously scored...seems to change with every bar, enfolding bite-size pieces of classic minimalism, brass band tradition, electronic noise, & video game plasticity... intensely virtuosic and giddily joyful. electronically slathered trombone... Paxton is a monster improviser ...connects his garrulous attack to the most extroverted playing of George Lewis & Roswell Rudd..." - **Peter Margasak, Bandcamp Daily Best Contemporary Classical**

"Paxton's imaginative tapestry of sound is one of the unexpected surprises of contemporary music: an elusive patchwork of improvisation and classical rigor, composite music and anarchy, a celebration of orchestral-jazz maximalism." - **OndRaock**

"jovial and gay... Vivaldi-like spring chicken energy... this music is like a refreshing drink of water after a long period of thirst...manic treat to keep our spirits up" - **Morning Star**

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"play solo that made the eyes sting and then use his slide to make farting noises and knock over pints on the front tables...'religious, calm and imposing accents to savage, orgiastic outburst'... In the hands of a master like composer / improviser Alex Paxton, the trombone does all this and more. cheerful chaos – more Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em than Hellzapoppin'....crepuscular souls to perfection...Bone of his Bone Extraordinary." - **The Wire**

"Feels like an evacuation of something fundamental and urgent...bleeding chunks of something greater than sum of their parts; a compositional outpouring that started its inexorable flow sometime ago and will surely continue on over after the neat boundaries of a mere CD's runtime have been met" - **Neil Luck, TEMPO magazine**

"Colourful wonder bag... glam rock - and dubstep-soaked thoroughly refreshing eclecticism ...an impression of exuberant joy, real community, excessive partying and over-scumping champagne. So this album might just be the best time imaginable" - **Ole Hubner, Musik Text**

"marvellous stuff..meticulously arranged frantic unpredictable arrangements that give the impression of improvisation.. sounds like absolutely nothing else." - **Boogalo Radio**

"a rising star of the international composer scene...whose innovative musical approach surprises and inspires."
- **neue musikzeitung**

Gaudeamus Composition Prize 2022

"Fun and really rich, varied, dense, maximalist, fun, joyful and unafraid."

"Sometimes Voices"- Ivor Novello British Composer Awards 2021 - Winner Best Small Chamber Composition

"a highly innovative work of exceptional creative imagination and musical energy, packed with life force unlike anything else." – **Ivors Academy Jury**

"Encore" - BBC Proms, National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, Rafael Payare (August 2021)

"This is what an orchestra can be like in the 21st century: an ensemble that speaks with one voice yet also gives voice to each of its members" - **The Times**

Music for Bosch People (NMC Records and Birmingham Record Company – released April 2021)

"life that this offbeat troublemaker tries to capture, and one wonders with what organs he writes: the laughter and the joys (it bubbles and sparkles), the excitements (reproductive or aggressive), the energy and vitality – like a sap that knows only springtime" - **Crescendo Magazine**

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"Operatic Game Boy music played by a virtuosic motley crew that's inexplicably been hired to provide live jingles for a primetime TV show sometime in the recent past that never quite was" Point of Departure "Paxton is a system-crasher of genre, who merges jamming video game soundtracks, musical overtures, virtuoso chamber music and jazz improv into an unmistakable style...highly complex, sophisticated and extremely entertaining, virtuoso ad absurdum" - **Neue Zeitschrift für Musik**

"Step forward Alex Paxton, incipient savior of difficult listening . . . formidable virtuosity. It seems to be a meditation on virtuosity: Paxton's own take on Charlie Parker-style bebop or Paganini. . . mountains of crisp detail that are legible when taken singly but accumulate into a surreal and overwhelming whole" - **Positionen**

"We hear the trombone run the gamut from furious chatter to muffled screams, sorrowful sighs into searing growls and back. "Virtuosic" doesn't really cover it." - **Point of Departure**

"In a dark time this music will make you smile...manic contrast heavy.....This is the most joyous sound I've heard in ages!" - **New York Times**

"the music is whimsical, animated and polystylistic, with abrupt changes reminiscent of classic John Zorn, as though determined to portray an entire fantasy world in one tableau" - **Micheal Schell, Sequenza21**

"Not a lot causes this writer to laugh out loud, but this album did, repeatedly . . . images of an anarchic opera, samples from TV and film adding to this rich and borderline frantic mêlé . . . cutting-edge neo-classical with more than a touch of downtown New York-style jazz improvisation and, what's more, it's tremendous fun"

- **London Jazz News**

"Uniquely and audaciously manic. Call an ambulance, just in case. This is one of the naughtiest CDs to come my way in some time...shares Zappa's creativity, and his talent for pushing his music as far as it can go without teetering it into anarchy...Ideas are thrown against the wall with machine gun rapidity, and they go splat all over the listener, no matter how adept he or she is ducking...It's like bring tied down and tickled ruthlessly by a gang of nerds...not that I would know." - **Amazon. 5 stars**

"What none of the literature says is that his music is completely bonkers. The title track is 15 minutes long & I loved the whole thing, it grabs your attention all the way through... I highly recommend this album it is great fun"

- **Peter Slavid on European Modern Jazz, HayesFm**

"Paxton, Like Hieronymus Bosch, is one of those rare artists who manage to make a virtue of excess. The turbulent and joyful spirit of his music bubbles up irrepressibly in his trombone playing, and courses torrentially through his flamboyantly unpredictable compositions. . . Surfing the crest of their exuberance is an extraordinary experience."

- **The Wire Magazine**

Corncrack Dreams" – Nevis Ensemble (nonclassical records – released 2021)

"Really quirky, fun, dynamic...Wow! gives your senses a bit of shake. I tell you, I had to listen a number of times, absolutely terrific." - **James McDougall, BBC Radio 3**

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"Dadd's Fairies", London Symphony Orchestra (NMC records – released 2021)

"a joyful mashup . . . such an engaging energy and Ivesian imagination" - Planet Hugill

UK Mexican Arts, 45-minute improvised live trombone solo performance (2021)

" . . . his sound was monstrous and multiple—a stretching and splitting of the bounds of the solo form itself . . . touching and self-consciously humorous. Imagine a scene from Sesame Street with a tuneless choir and a deranged trombone virtuoso and you get some idea. . . Paxton's trombone seems to transmute a scrambled range of human speech, reflecting something of the frenetic and fragmentary form of contemporary discourse. . . He eats idioms for breakfast. That's why his music is so sweet and so strange. Gone is any agonised avoidance of clichés or calculated coolness. In its place is a riotous, hot pink overabundance of love and rage . . . music grounded in the solid content of sentiment and spiralled through a stratosphere of forms. It's frank and vibrational, emotional and dizzying. It links up "what is direct with what is advanced" (Amiri Baraka). It's bizarrely moving music—go and hear it." - **The Wire**