

# BRAITHWAITE & KATZ

Communications

## NEWS RELEASE

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## Amsterdam-based sextet Spinifex crafts a dizzying but infectious blend of free improv, avant-jazz and punk rock on its scintillating ninth album

***Undrilling the Hole***, due out November 22, 2024 via TryTone Records, features seven new compositions by alto saxophonist/artistic director Tobias Klein, with trumpeter Bart Maris, saxophonist John Dikeman, guitarist Jasper Stadhouders, bassist Gonçalo Almeida and drummer Philipp Moser

*“What’s exciting—and impressive—about Spinifex’s music is the way the group manages to absorb and synthesize a variety of influences [and] produce something greater than a simple grab-bag of styles... they’re also able to foreground technical mastery via incredibly tight, complex structures and at the same time leave room for freer play and discovery.”* – Eric McDowell, The Free Jazz Collective

*“This heavily international group specializes in a collective meshing, combining the precision of composed themes with ample leeway for crashing over the barriers, splattering down onto a grassy field of wild improvisatory freedom.”* – Martin Longley, All About Jazz

American novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote, “The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.” A more playful, experimental version of that quote could serve as the mission statement for the adventurous Amsterdam-based sextet **Spinifex**. The band’s music is a full-throttle embrace of the visceral and cerebral, a spirited blend of free improv abandon, avant-jazz complexity, punk rock aggression and compulsively infectious grooves.

As artistic director and alto saxophonist **Tobias Klein** explains it, “We want to engage people intellectually with our music, but at the same time we want to overwhelm people in a way that works well with audiences in a sweaty nightclub atmosphere.”

Nine albums and almost 20 years into their existence, Spinifex has proved remarkably agile at splitting that difference, despite those who insist that Klein’s divergent goals amount to cognitive dissonance. The title of the band’s latest album, ***Undrilling the Hole***, is a declaration of its paradoxical success, echoed by most of the song titles contained within: “Embrace the Contradictions,” “Explode the Paradox,” “Admire the Ambiguities.” Unlike prior Spinifex releases, which shared credits between the band’s several gifted composers, *Undrilling the Hole* was entirely written by Klein. The focused set openly declares its insistence on audaciously threading that challenging needle – even if Klein himself is hard pressed to explain why exactly it works so well.

“It’s still a bit of a mystery for me,” the saxophonist shrugs. “I think it has to do with the personal relations in the band. At the beginning it didn’t seem very logical at all because everyone had such different backgrounds. But we came to trust each other and everyone was willing to invest time and experiment, especially in the early years. It came as a big surprise that it clicked from the beginning, and that’s a magical thing.”

Originally from Germany, Klein came to Amsterdam in 1990 to delve into jazz, contemporary classical music and non-western techniques in a conservatory setting, and continues to bridge the worlds of contemporary jazz, chamber music and multicultural traditions. Belgian trumpet master **Bart Maris** has

been a mainstay of the European improvised music scene for decades, playing with a number of wide-ranging bands including Think of One, X-Legged Sally and Flat Earth Society. American tenor saxophonist **John Dikeman** runs the gamut of improvised music styles, working in bands like Cactus Truck and Universal Indians as well as his trio with William Parker and Hamid Drake. Dutch guitarist **Jasper Stadhouders** has worked with such improvisatory luminaries as Ken Vandermark, Nate Wooley, Han Bennink, Mars Williams and Mette Rasmussen, among others. Portuguese bassist **Gonçalo Almeida** has roots stemming from both acoustic jazz and ambient noise music, while drummer **Philipp Moser** is a member of the Dutch progressive metal band Cilice – and holds a degree in astrophysics.

Klein originally formed Spinifex as a nonet in 2005, paring the band down to its present incarnation in 2010. He named it after a resilient species of grass found in Australia, which grows well even in rocky, inhospitable soil – a wry acknowledgment of the members’ seemingly incompatible backgrounds, and possibly even the not always supportive music industry. Forging a strong band culture through relentless touring and a dedication to honing their vigorous collective sound, Spinifex has made a strength of its diversity via intuitive, almost alchemical means.

The compositions on *Undrilling the Hole* achieve that aspiration in exhilarating fashion, seizing on the rhythm section’s punk and metal identities to undergird each piece with a bracing momentum while layering complex shifts in tempo and intricately written lines over the top until unleashing blistering moments of free improvisation. The music was developed over an intense tour in December 2023 that brought them through Eastern and Central Europe and into Ukraine. Material and inspiration come from unexpected places, including Klein’s study of South Indian Carnatic music and mathematical devices; “Tatiana” even incorporates a riff borrowed from the Australian noise rock band Tropical Fuck Storm.

“I try to exploit our diversity every time I write for the band,” Klein explains. “I always want there to be elements of very different types of music, combined into something organic that you can no longer take apart into its individual components. It becomes one.”

## **Spinifex**

Amsterdam-based Spinifex, named after a tough Australian species of grass, may at first sound like a combination of free improv, punk rock and other typically Western contemporary music. However, beneath the surface the listener will discover ancient cyclical rhythms from Turkish and Indian musical cultures. Drummer and astrophysicist Philipp Moser is known for his work with Dutch progressive metal band Cilice. Guitarist Jasper Stadhouders was a member of Ken Vandermark’s group Made To Break and leads his own Polyband. The Portuguese-born, Rotterdam-based bassist Gonçalo Almeida switches effortlessly between a beautifully rounded sound and heavy electric distortion. Tenor saxophonist John Dikeman has been impressing audiences performing with his trio with William Parker and Hamid Drake, as well as with Universal Indians/Joe McPhee. Flemish trumpet master Bart Maris has become one of the most prominent and original voices in European progressive jazz. Alto saxophonist Tobias Klein, the motor behind the band, has also made a name for himself as a bass clarinet player and composer.

**Spinifex – *Undrilling the Hole***  
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[spinifexmusic.nl](http://spinifexmusic.nl)  
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[spinifex.bandcamp.com](http://spinifex.bandcamp.com)  
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