



Let X=X (Live)
Laurie Anderson with Sexmob (Nonesuch)
ResoNation Trio/Ultra Resonance
Steven Bernstein (Royal Potato Family)
 by Kurt Gottschalk

A collaboration between trumpeter, composer and arranger Steven Bernstein, and performance artist Laurie Anderson, is as much a surprise as either of their individual careers by a factor of two. They've been individually enigmatic and unpredictable for decades: Anderson the quizzical observer and Bernstein the fun-loving jazzman. They wouldn't seem to share a lot of common ground, but Bernstein loves an orchestration challenge, which might have been all the overlap they needed for his four-piece Sexmob to back her on a greatest hits tour in 2023. About a quarter of *Let X=X (Live)*'s 23 tracks (available as two CDs, three LPs or download) come from Anderson's debut album, 1982's *Big Science* (plus the "O Superman" B-side, "Walk the Dog"), and they're consistently the most exciting tracks on the collection. Bernstein's arrangements for songs originally dominated by keyboards, violin and accordion add a punch that makes them sound new again. Subsequent albums used larger ensembles and smoother arrangements. The new versions of those songs are strong but less surprising.

Monologues are interspersed throughout, as are a few surprises. Bernstein accentuates the calypso on the

little-known 1977 single "It's not the bullet that kills you – it's the hole", dedicated to the controversial artist Chris Burden. An arrangement of Lou Reed's "Junior Dad" (originally recorded with the band Metallica for Reed's ill-begotten final album) uses Reed's isolated vocal track against a gentler accompaniment, and condenses the song considerably. Laurie and the Mob do the catalogue of her late husband a kindness in reworking the song. The album concludes with a Buddhist lesson (related by Anderson) that "the reason we're here is to have a really, really, really good time." This belief might point to the true Anderson-Bernstein overlap.

Bernstein called on bassist Scott Colley and drummer Nasheet Waits for *ResoNation Trio*, a laid back and fully enjoyable set that highlights what a superb instrumentalist Bernstein is. The uncommon trumpet trio leaves no room to hide, and Bernstein sets aside his usual slide in favor of the more common valve trumpet with a sharp balance of precision and soulfulness. The album commences with a wonderfully rumbling take on the blues standard "Sitting on Top of the World". But that's only half the story. For the second LP of the set, or the second half of the CD, Bernstein handed the *ResoNation* cuts over to Scotty Hard (who produced and possessed the last Sexmob album, 2023's *The Hard Way*) to remix, repurpose and restructure it into a heavy, low-key jam. Hard isn't beholden to the original recordings, making *Ultra Resonance* a very opposite side of a very same coin. It's got processed beats and up-front synths, but the sound of breathing instruments is very much in the mix. Like the first half of the project, it doesn't push for speed where it very much might have, instead gravitating toward midtempo grooves full of spirit. Unsurprisingly, even for a straight-up acoustic session, Bernstein has surprises up his sleeve, and good ones at that.

For more info visit nonesuch.com and royalpotatofamily.com. The *Let X=X* album release concert is at Central Park Summerstage Jun. 26. The *Ultra Resonance* album release concert is at National Sawdust Jun. 27 and *Solar Myth* (Philadelphia, PA) Jun. 30. See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



Live in the Listening Room
Isaiah Collier/Tim Regis (The Vinyl Factory)
 by Marc Medwin

If the John Coltrane/Elvin Jones or Sonny Fortune/Rashied Ali duos received an update, they might sound something like the vinyl-only release of *Live in the Listening Room*. Saxophonist Isaiah Collier and drummer-percussionist Tim Regis recorded this EP (three tracks totaling 26 minutes), direct-to-tape, in January 2025 at Devon Turnbull's Hi-Fi Listening Room Dream No. 1, at 180 Studios in London; but enter a third member of the group: sound artist Sonny Daze, who transformed that already fertile space into a malleable, multi-traditional Xanadu of possibility.

Like poet Samuel Coleridge's "Kubla Khan, Or, A Vision in a Dream: A Fragment", describing a fantastical pleasure dome, album opener, "Pacing Devon's Room" is an extended fragment, its impact cavernously measureless even as Collier and Regis carve

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