DRUMMER ISSUE

TOM TEASLEY

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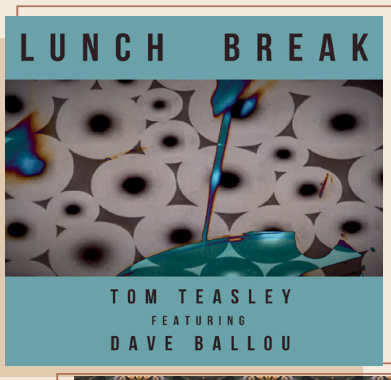



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DROP THE NEEDLE



Drum Stories
Andrew Cyrille, Billy Hart, Bill Stewart, Nasheet Waits (Analog Tone Factory)
by Franz A. Matzner

Drum Stories is a remarkable release focused on the expressive possibilities of the drum set, featuring master craftsmen Andrew Cyrille, Billy Hart, Bill Stewart and Nasheet Waits. Recorded with all-analog, audiophile clarity (pressed on 180g vinyl), the album comprises eleven solo pieces and three duets between the elder statesmen of the four: Cyrille and Hart, each of whom turned 86 last month. On their duets, they juggle light and dark, color and space, like magicians. Luminescent balls hover, then skate from cymbals to snare. Bass drops and tom strikes chase each other, jumping from one player to the other in a complexity of call-and-response. Nothing is still: dynamics shift; rhythms pulse from staccato to fluid.

Cyrille's "Cymbal Sonorities", which opens the album with a minimalist concentration on cymbals and bells, instills a meditative state. On "Haitian Shadows", his mallets travel across the set, maintaining a constant pulse within the shifting patterns as they flow from bass to toms to snare in what is a dynamic dance. Across his featured selections, Stewart builds architectures of overlapping rhythms that spring from intricate snare sequences and forceful grooves, while playing with traditional forms and elastic time on the racing "Boogie Person" and the sonorous "Aria". Waits closes the album with three exercises in subtlety: "Kind Brain" weaves together multiple grooves, the pace accelerating and decelerating in bursts of energy; "Farewell You Daddy, It's Your Time Now" proceeds with crisp, almost military snare; "B in Exile" brings the album full circle with calm brushes and resonant cymbals.

Drums are foundational to jazz, and *Drum Stories* provides the rare chance to experience the instrument in an isolated context. Drum aficionados will be astounded, but audiences of all musical stripes will find their spirits stirred and hearts moved.

For more info visit analogtonefactory.com. Billy Hart is at Unitarian Universalist Congregation (Montclair, NJ) Dec. 5. Bill Stewart is at Bar Bayeux Dec. 2 (with Jerome Sabbagh and Melissa Aldana). Nasheet Waits is at Smalls Dec. 4-5 (with John Hébert) and SEEDS Brooklyn Dec. 10 (with Neta Raanan). See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



Predetermination
Contemporary Jazz Quartet (feat. Sunny Murray, Gary Peacock) (Formalibera)
New Light / Incantations
Sunny Murray, Arthur Doyle, Rasul Siddik (NoBusiness)
by Pierre Crépon

Drummer Sunny Murray passed away nine years ago this month at age 81. His career at times placed him right by jazz' beating heart, but also oftentimes at its unenviable margins. Recent releases significantly expand the flow of quality posthumous discoveries.

With *Predetermination*, Italian label Formalibera sheds light on a year spent at the crucible of major developments. In 1964, after recording its masterpiece *Spiritual Unity*, the trio of Albert Ayler (tenor), Gary Peacock (bass) and Murray embarked on a low-profile tour of Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands, augmented by trumpeter Don Cherry. At the tour's onset, that September at Copenhagen's Café Montmartre, the occasion arose to tape another stone-cold classic, *Ghosts*. But it turns out that Murray and Peacock recorded more; a radio session paired them with members of the Danish avant garde group the Contemporary Jazz Quartet: Franz Beckerlee (alto), Hugh Steinmetz (trumpet), Steffen Andersen (bass) and Simon Koppel (drums). But Murray and Peacock are only featured on this album's title-track, a 13-minute piece (minus Koppel)—and there is something nearly shocking about hearing the classic Ayler group without Ayler. As with the negative of a familiar picture, light becomes dark and different details emerge. Obviously missing is the raw power of Ayler's themes and unique saxophone sound, yet the somber, nearly foreboding atmosphere that gave the trio its inscrutable magic is definitely there. The story the Danish musicians are writing (as can be heard on the remaining tracks) is no less worthy of interest, but it is a different one.

The concert split across NoBusiness' *New Light* and *Incantations* (both available on CD and LP) was taped in 1999 in the port city of Bordeaux, in southwestern France. By then, socioeconomically, the revolutionary music of the '60s had largely been defeated. Still, this great-sounding tape catches it at its best. Notes by concert promoter Philippe Alen recount how the gig was originally supposed to pair Murray with saxophonist Sonny Simmons, how his replacement Arthur Doyle did not show up until the last minute, and the trepidation of trumpeter Rasul Siddik at the prospect of a naked duet with Murray. Doyle, here on tenor, and occasionally flute and vocals, was still a bop-playing student in Tennessee when Murray recorded with Ayler, and much of his defining work was done with Milford Graves, a drummer who could be seen as a Murray rival. The Murray/Doyle combination is nonetheless outstanding. Both have been described as powerhouses of abandon, but they actually are economical players seasoned enough to always maintain an engulfing, broad sound. "Shades, loudness and softness, microtone, larger than a whole step, smaller than a half step," Doyle used to say. This is what's happening within the maelstrom. The musicians know how to sequence and vary moods, reaching peaks around a Cherry theme and on "Unidentified 2". Although carving out a space for his trumpet was not easy for the slightly younger Siddik, he does rise to the demands of extended and compact improvisations. Yes, this is smashing free jazz throughout.

Nearly a decade after Sunny Murray's passing, we must be grateful to those who keep his radiant cymbal sound and spirit alive.

For more info visit forcedexposure.com and nobusinessrecords.com