



Revealing the Essence

Leap of Faith

Evil Clown

This ensemble features the artist PEK and Michael Knobloch from Sub-Unit No. 1 (see previous review). They are joined by Glynis Lomon on cello, aquasonic, and vocals. Vance Provey adds trumpet, flugelhorn, and additional percussion (Tibetan bowls, glockenspiel, and crotales).

PEK performs on a variety of clarinets and saxophones, as well as a medieval horn, goat horn, melodica, and ocarina. He also adds percussion, playing cowbells, almglocken, woodblocks, temple blocks, chimes, xylophone, balafon, and crotales. Knobloch uses a wide variety of conventional and unconventional percussion instruments, including a frame drum, shakers, rattles, water-filled mason jars, sandpaper blocks, Tibetan bowls, a slinky, tree ornaments, and a carpet protector.

The album has only one track, which is over an hour in length. The instrumentalists listen to one another, complementing each other without adding clutter to the musical dialogue. Each musician is prominently featured. The music is improvisational and free, allowing for a unique listener experience.

—Jeff W. Johnson

"...The Ayes Have It" - Vol. II

Randy Gloss

Orenda Records

Randy Gloss's album "...The Ayes Have It" - Vol. II is a hand drum world tour exploring modern applications for everything from pandeiro to riq, from congas to aFrame (an electro-organic frame drum). Each piece is thoughtfully written and performed and has a specific and personal meaning and origin for the composer. The album blends acoustic instruments with electronic ones, traditional playing techniques with modern timbres.

The tracks are at times improvisatory and at other times carefully composed. The album serves as a consumable gateway to these instruments for new listeners. Even the drum set solo, "A Little Change in the Pocket Blues," includes a recited tabla *theka* in the second half. The influence of traditional Middle Eastern rhythms flows throughout the album, moving alongside the influence of various modern musical styles and the inspiration of other musicians.

The use of various metallic instruments and extended techniques gives a cinematic flavor to many of the tracks. Constantly fluctuating and complex rhythms and meters make the pieces groovy but unpredictable. Track to track, the

listener never knows what soundscape will be presented next.

Existing somewhere between ambient music, danceable rhythms, and the avant-garde, "...The Ayes Have It" is worth the listen for anyone who loves rhythm, is fascinated by the capabilities of drums, or simply loves music that is crafted with both love and talent.

—Marilyn K. Clark Silva

The Complete Columbia Recordings

Steve Smith and Vital Information

Wounded Bird Records

Wounded Bird Records has re-released the first four albums by legendary jazz-rock/fusion band Vital Information and world-class drummer Steve Smith. The recordings were re-mastered for this release and give the listener a clear presentation of the group's evolution from 1983 to 1988. Smith is joined on these albums by heavyweight players Tim Landers, David Wilczewski, Mike Stern, Dean Brown, Barry Finnerty, Frank Gambale, Andy Narell, Tom Coster, Jay Oliver, Lenny Castro, Mike Fisher, and Armando Peraza. While rooted in the jazz-rock/fusion style, each album features specific stylistic combinations and nuances that capture the development of a band in a constant state of growth and expansion.

The band's self-titled album, *Vital Information*, was released in 1983. Even early in their career, the diversity of styles is immediately noticeable. This is heard in with the deep-pocket, slow funk tune "Looks Bad Feels Good," the experimental swing track "V.G.," and a nod to their Massachusetts roots in "Stoughton to Stockholm Samba," which alternates between Latin and fusion styles.

Orion (1984) is more keyboard/synthesizer-driven. The opening track, "Future Primitive," consists of unison guitar and keyboard licks that characterize much of the album and 1980s fusion style. The same is true with the guitar-heavy title track, "Orion." However, not to be placed in a box, the band ventures into other styles, as heard on the swing, R&B-influenced track "Blade/Blues to Bappe."

As one might imagine from the title, *Global Beat* (1986) features the band's use of non-Western instruments and styles. Of note are "Island Holiday," featuring the steel pan stylings of Andy Narell, and the reggae-influenced "Johnny Cat." In addition, "Jave and a Nail" and "Global Beat" are entirely drums and percussion.

Fiafiaga (Celebration) from 1988 showcases both Western and non-Western influences, as heard on the African-influenced "Babaluwaiye" and the tightly arranged '80s-style rock tracks "Sunday Afternoon" and "Please Don't Feel Bad."

Steve Smith and Vital Information's music is truly a celebration of multiple styles and musical influences being able to coexist, and this collection is a testament to their curiosity, sense of experimentation, and world-class musicianship.

—Jason Baker

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