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ASAF SIRKIS: SHEPHERD'S STORIES

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Jul 23, 2013 | By **ABLX STAFF**

Amazing Record from UK Drummer and Composer

With the latest release by his trio, Shepherd's Stories, Israeli drummer Asaf Sirkis proves he's entering the rare air of great percussive jazz/fusion composer-bandleaders like Tony Williams and Bill Bruford.

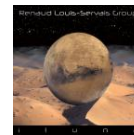
The comparisons, in part, can be credited to his trio partners. Israeli bassist Yaron Stavi provides a stabilizing, supportive and fluid presence, and Greek guitarist Tassos Spiliotopoulos' work echoes Allan Holdsworth -- the veteran British guitar demigod with a lengthy solo career amid banner sideman status with Soft Machine, Gong and yes, both Williams and Bruford.

Sirkis wrote all eight lengthy compositions on Shepherd's Stories, another impressive feat. His explorative opener, 1801, opens with a snare drum flurry and Spiliotopoulos' chiming chords before the guitarist unleashes a liquid solo 90 seconds in that never repeats itself over two minutes. Guest Fender Rhodes player John Turville then gets a break that recalls Alan Pasqua, the keyboardist in Williams' final Lifetime band from the mid-1970s.

The ballad Eyes Tell follows, with the trio making as much use of the space between notes as the notes themselves, and the evocative Traveller features guest vocalist Sylwia Bialas chanting amid its 5/8-timed cadence before a warmly melodic bass solo by Stavi.

Spiliotopoulos opens Meditation with soundscape notes before he's joined by the bassist, and the two engage in a dialog for a full two-and-a-half minutes before Sirkis enters the evocative piece with mallets on his cymbals. The guitarist then offers five full minutes of uncommonly-stirring

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legato fretwork over the rhythm section's comfortable pace (proving why all three of these simpatico trio musicians play in each others' bands).

Turville's electric piano colors Dream Sister as the core trio plays in 10/8 time; Gareth Lockrane's flute the dreamy epic Together, and two trio pieces close the disc. The title track features Sirkis coaxing an impressive early solo by Stavi with his insistent ride cymbal pulse, followed by yet another flurry by Spiliotopoulos in which the fretting of his left hand is as impressive as what he does with the pick in his right hand.

The 10-minute closer, Two Part Melody, is an essay in relaxed trio interplay that leaves listeners wanting more and further proves what a democratic leader Sirkis is. The drummer has been releasing trio albums for 15 years and recording for nearly 25 overall, and Shepherd's Stories will indeed have fans of creative instrumental fusion anticipating his next bookend.

Personnel:

Asaf Sirkis (drums)
Tassos Spiliotopoulos (guitars)
Yaron Stavi (bass)
John Turville (electric piano)
Gareth Lockrane (flute)
Sylwia Bialas (vocal)

Tracklisting:

1. 1801
 2. Eyes Tell
 3. Traveller
 4. Meditation
 5. Dream Sister
 6. Together
 7. Shepherd's Stories
 8. Two Part Melody
- Bill Meredith, <http://www.williammeredith.net>

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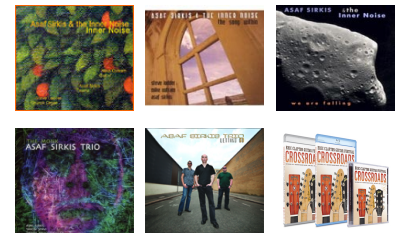
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