

ASAF SIRKIS: SHEPHERD'S STORIES

JOHN STEVENSON · DECEMBER 30, 2013

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Asaf Sirkis is a thinking man's jazz drummer.

After several years as the percussive force behind Gilad Atzmon's Orient House Ensemble (OHE), he now leads his own groups to growing critical acclaim, with a handful of recordings such as *The Song Within* (with The Inner Noise). He is also an in-demand session musician who has contributed his skinsmanship to artists such as guitarist Maciek Pysz.

His absorbing 2013 release, *Shepherd's Stories*, finds him in the tunefully ruminative company of electric bassist Yaron Stavi and guitarist Tassos Spiliotopoulos. Guest musicians Gareth Lockrane (flute), John Turville (Fender Rhodes) and Sliwia Bialas (vocals) provide added ballast.

While it is evident that Sirkis's stylistic influences on *Shepherd's Stories* can be traced to Bill Bruford and Billy Cobham, Asaf is difficult to pin down: the opening track, 1801, reveals Asaf's facility to play subtle and soft with the same exacting skill that he executes incredibly brisk fills and runs across his drumset. There's definitely a fluid, uniquely spiritual vibe living in each track.

The wordless, ethereal vocal that Bialas invests into *Traveller*, alongside the spare melodicism of Spiliotopoulos's guitar, carry the listener down an Alice-in-Wonderland rabbit hole.

The title track is similarly imbued with moments of aural discovery. Ditto *Dream Sister*, *Meditation* and *Together*.

For Sirkis, music is partly about the way music unites people to their true selves:

"I've always been fascinated with the way melodies affect our soul and how music can connect us with our true selves. I call this effect the Shepherd's Story effect. When a melody reminds you of something you've heard before, a sense of 'I know this from somewhere' but cannot pinpoint from where. It's a similar feeling to déjà vu or when you're listening to some music and it reminds you of the way you felt in other times of your life. The difference here is that *'Shepherd's Stories'* connects you with something larger than yourself, a forgotten truth or collective consciousness. These moments are moments of connection to our soul; they are important pointers or reminders of where we have come from".

For more information on Asaf, please visit <http://www.asafsirkis.co.uk>

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