

## Reviews of *Phantomwise* (Acoustic Levitation, 2012)

Dolf Mulder of Vital Weekly

“Grasse I know as a member of the remarkable Los Angeles-based impro-combo Surrealestate. Here is a chance to meet him personally. Eleven works by and played by Gustavo Aguilar (drums, percussion), Cristian Amigo electric guitar), Emily Hay (flute, alto flute and voice), Tom Steck (drum kit percussion) and Jonathon Grasse himself on electric guitar and *violão de sete cordas*. Grasse works as a composer and ethnomusicologist at a university in the Los Angeles region. In November 2011 Centaur Records released his "Chamber Music", a collection of works for small line ups.

Acoustic Levitation gives air to a collection of collective improvisations initiated by Grasse. I find it hard to believe these pieces are totally improvised, but liner notes state that we are dealing here with spontaneous collective improvisations. In my ears these improvisations sound as a cross between improvisation and composed chamber music. Also allusions of rock and popular music appear eventually. Traces of jazz I could not identify. This makes these improvisations strangely enough closer to chamber music than to jazz. The high level of complexity makes me lose contact sometimes, but overall these improvisations are intriguing and fascinating.”

LMNOP, of babysue.com

“Peculiar modern improvisational music from guitarist/composer Jonathon Grasse.”

On *Phantomwise*, Grasse is joined by cutting edge experimental musicians Gustavo Aguilar, Cristian Amigo, Emily Hay, and Tom Steck. Anyone who is even slightly familiar with any of these artists has an idea of what to expect here which is...the *unexpected*.

Jonathon and his associates play music that is spontaneous, experimental, and most likely unscripted for the most part. The compositions on *Phantomwise* are abstract, peculiar, and almost completely absent of any sort of commercial appeal. Many would find these songs to be difficult to absorb and appreciate...but that would be missing the point entirely.

These folks aren't interested in coming up with catchy melodies...nor were they trying to create soothing background music. During these recordings these musicians were obviously feeding off one another's creative energies...which may perhaps explain the odd nature of the sounds here.

Call it modern jazz...modern classical...or experimental...this album is simply *strange* and abstruse. Eleven perplexing compositions including "Beat Red," "Thank God It's Dydd Gwener," "Phantomwise," and "Clandestine Rotations."