

An abstract painting featuring a vibrant orange-red sky and a blue body of water. The water is depicted with horizontal brushstrokes and contains several dark, circular shapes. In the background, there are faint, dark silhouettes of ships or structures. The overall composition is divided into three main horizontal sections: a blue sky at the top, an orange-red sky in the middle, and a blue water section at the bottom.

RICHTER 858

MUSIC BY BILL FRISELL

**RICHTER 858: OUTLINE RE: STRUCTURE,
AESTHETICS, QUESTIONS, THOUGHTS
BY PRODUCER DAVID BRESKIN
(DECEMBER 2001)**

FROM NOTES TOWARDS STRUCTURE FOR FRISELL

There should be eight distinct pieces of music, each piece having a 1:1 relationship to the painting which serves as its "trigger." Repeated motifs and/or structures shared by a number of pieces are perfectly acceptable, indeed natural, as there are such motifs and structures shared by certain of the paintings.

The main eight pieces may be roughly the same length as each other, but also are perfectly free to be very different lengths. Your reaction to the paintings will be wholly subjective and personal. One painting may simply not "ask you" for as much exploration and development as another. This is a natural tendency and should not be fought. While it is true that the first seven paintings are all exactly the same size and created with similar means, duration in music is not necessarily analogous to scale in the visual arts. Likewise, in music, one would never confuse duration with significance any more than one would dare value a huge Julian Schnabel painting over a tiny Vermeer simply because of size. Given your full freedoms in this dimension, it may still be your wish to explore the idea of uniformity between the paintings.



858-1

Abstract Picture, 1999

oil on aluminum, 50 x 72 cm



858-2

Abstract Picture, 1999

oil on aluminum, 50 x 72 cm

FROM NOTES TOWARDS AESTHETICS FOR FRISSELL

The music may take its "cues" from specific moves or passages in the paintings. Certain "details" may also be the triggering element behind compositional or stylistic choices you make. Thus, a particular fragment of a painting may be the triggering element; the relationship between two such fragments may be the triggering element; the entire painting itself—its vibe, feeling, colors, strategies, structures, interventions, whatever—may be the triggering element. In all cases, musical choices are "motivated" by visual stimulæ, however vague and ineffable and mysterious those motivations; or, on the other hand, however specific and concrete and particular those motivations happen to be. The idea is to use the paintings as not just "inspiration" but "motivation": I believe that the deeper and more intimately involved you are with looking, the more perfect will be the relationship between your music and Richter's paintings. This is to say, within the relationship between you and the paintings, you have almost total freedom of expression.

The music should express the full range of the paintings and the full range of your voice as a composer and guitarist: formally, thematically, emotionally, coloristically.

The music should deal with the idea of "The Series": that is, closely linked pieces, painted/composed (executed/performed) at the same time, with consistent applications and modes of making. The music should have some narrative or relational sense—however abstract. A sense of story, development, layering, beginning, ending: one thing in relation to the other. Your music should feel like it is of a piece: a suite, of sorts, however loosely we define that term.

The pictures have their own speeds. Their own velocities. Their own frequencies. The music in some way could/should deal with this. Richter paints to music—no surprise

when you look at his work. There are a lot of rhythmic things happening in the paintings. The music should respect these speeds and rhythms, but not slavishly so.

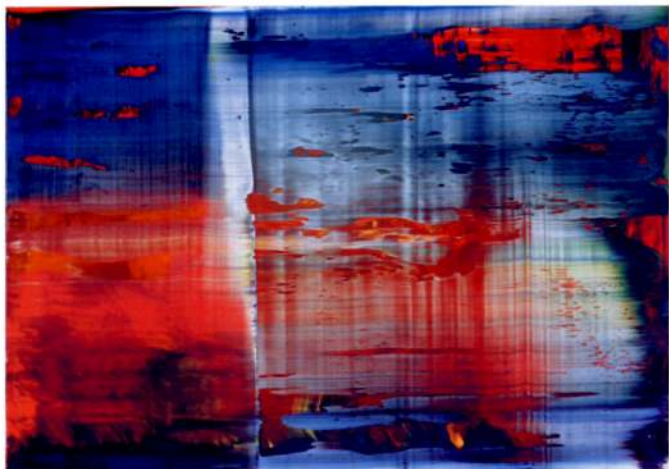
The music should not be "pretty" in the conventional or sentimental way, because the paintings are simply not. I'm not suggesting, as others have, that the paintings are cold and heartless, mechanical and rote. I don't think this is true at all. No: I think the paintings are ravishing and produce great emotions in viewers. (If Richter produces them clinically and without "emotion," that is an entirely separate matter.) But the way in which they are ravishing or productive of great emotion is never in a conventional or traditional sense: that is, if they are beautiful, it is the beauty that exists on the "other side" of prettiness, or conventional notions of order, pleasure, containment. They are not nostalgic (in the way his landscape paintings may be). So: while the paintings are not pretty, they are—and the music triggered by them could be—ravishing, violent, jarring, elegant, heavy, light, sumptuous, gridded, organic, harsh, gentle, ugly, tasteless, voluptuous, polite, rude, lovely, rhapsodic, rigorous, astringent, accidental, rational, turbulent, glossy, moving, mechanical, gleaming, dirty, wet, dry, and lyrical. (If they are lyrical, and I think they are, they sport a hard-edged lyricism.)

I expect the music will delve deep into the language of Electric Guitar. These are shimmer, "electric" paintings. They hold, bury, mix, and reveal a lot of visual noise—beautiful, aching, sweet, painful noise. In some ways you could say they are creations of different kinds of coloristic and structural noise, coming together to create an unusual composition, which—almost against its will—reveals beautiful melodies and harmonic cohesion. Oil painting is so "old fashioned," so "out of date," so "irrelevant" and Richter knows it: we live in a world of photography, film, video, cyberspace. And yet the paintings Richter makes are extremely contemporary—the look and feel of them is contemporary, today. I'm not saying that I can't "hear" your acoustic guitar being part of this, only that I do

very much like ("hear" in my eyes, so to speak) the idea of the full range of your electric guitars (from crystal purity—your signature sound—to crunching distortion) up against, in the midst of, rubbing against, over the top of, snaking its way through the three acoustic string instruments. The tension between these things, the frictive heat, I think could be very compelling as it relates specifically to these paintings and this project. Given the structures and methods of the paintings, and their "effects" on the viewer, I think there is a "rightness" to this architecture of electric guitar (the modern, the postmodern) with acoustic strings (the historical, the tradition, "oil painting," the academy). Seven of the eight paintings are, after all, on aluminum, a very modern metal. For this reason, I think your various delays and devices will be very appropriate for this project. In some ways they can be seen as an analog for some of Richter's procedures. Speed changes, abrupt tonal shifts, echo, degradation, inversion, reversal, layering, distortion, "processing": these are Richter's tools as well. He simply has different means, owing to his different medium.

Don't be afraid to experiment. These abstract paintings are created in the spirit of controlled experimentation. (And he's been changing the experiments for now more than 25 years.) The paintings are the product of the collision of ferocious discipline and rigor (order, science, craft, knowledge) with somewhat uncontrollable but not unknowable forces, resulting in certain kinds of compositional orders and structures being overlayed with, or punctured by, accident and incident. These same "contradictions" could infuse certain elements of the music, and indeed can't but otherwise. As an improvising musician, you know all about this—in your bones. I anticipate you will do plenty of writing but that there will be plenty of freedom with it.

There is a tension in the work between construction and destruction. At some point, the conversational debate between these two always ends and what's left is: silence, and the painting.



858-3

Abstract Picture, 1999

oil on aluminum, 50 x 72 cm

SOME FUNNY QUESTIONS AND THOUGHTS TO REMEMBER, FORGET AND/OR IGNORE FOR FRISELL

QUESTIONS:

What is the role of process as a determinant of "style"?

What is the difference between a mechanical process and an "organic" process?

What is the role of gesture (in paintings #1, #6 and #7) versus mechanical procedure?

What is the link between color in painting and tone in music?

What is the link between a "cut" or "tear" in a Richter abstract picture and a chord change? Shift in tempo? Abrupt shift in dynamics?

How does space operate in a painting? vis-a-vis music?

What musical analogs or corollaries are there to: the grid, the brushstroke, the knife cut, the horizontal sweep, the palimpsest?

In what way(s) will you construct the pieces to allow for and support improvisation, if any? And how will such improvisations advance the music and relate to the paintings?

Might there be room in the totality of the project for some collective improvisation, undertaken with certain rules to follow?

What is background in these paintings? What is foreground? What is figure? What is ground? How do these ideas work in the invisible world of music?

THOUGHTS:

Think about the story of the way these paintings were made.

Think about ignoring the story of the way these paintings are made, but still looking.

Think about the idea of The Palimpsest as it relates to Richter's paintings, your music (palimpsest comes from the Latin/Greek meaning: "scraped again").

Think about matte (dry) versus shiny (reverby) surfaces in music and painting.

Think about painting wet on wet, or improvising on top of a written or played figure before it's dry.

Think about the negotiation between the urban (culture, the built world) and the rural (nature, bucolic wilderness) in the paintings. Your work has undertaken, over the years, a negotiation between these urban and rural oppositions as well.

Think about the paintings as fictions; the same way one does a novel or movie.

Think about the edges of the paintings as framing devices: otherwise a painting would go on forever and never stop, and so wouldn't be a painting.

Think about the edges of the paintings as beginnings and ends of the pictures.

Think about the nature of time in these pictures: how they are records of their own making. This happened, then this, then this, then this you can see was before and this was after. How unlike music this is. And yet, in both cases: narrative.



858-4

Abstract Picture, 1999

oil on aluminum, 50 x 72 cm

AN INTERVIEW WITH BILL FRISELL BY TONY REIF (JUNE 2004)

What was your initial experience of the paintings like when you did finally see them (rather than reproductions of them)?

It was a luxurious sort of situation. David Breskin had arranged for me to see the paintings in San Francisco, all by myself, for as long as I wanted. I stayed there alone with the paintings for almost two hours, which is something I would never do under ordinary circumstances. I mean, it wasn't like I fasted for thirty days and went off in the woods with them, but to see the actual paintings—where Richter's hands had been—that's always so much more powerful. And, I've never done this before, but I had music paper with me, and I would stay with a painting and try to write down some kind of musical idea, or architecture or form, that reflected that painting. Like for example, if I saw a line in the painting I might write down a corresponding musical phrase. I was just trying to absorb emotionally, in my own way, what was happening in the paintings.

Anyway, I came out of there with rough blocks of ideas, though I don't know how many of those ideas survived into the final compositions. But what influenced me possibly more than the paintings themselves was my reaction to what I was learning about Richter himself. I read a few interviews with him. One thing that had a strong impact on what we did was what I learned about the process he goes through and the struggle he has over when a painting is finished. That's something I often struggle with. You're in the midst of making this thing and you're using an improvisational approach—that had a big impact on how we approached the recording. It was a live

recording and we did everything in basically one or two takes and without any editing. On most of my recordings I overdub, mix, obsess over it, go back and tweak things, but I wanted this one to somehow represent this gesture of paint going across aluminum or canvas, and you just have to deal with it being there.

I don't want to give the impression that it was all improvised because there was a lot of writing, and we practiced the music. But I was thinking of my role as the guy with the squeegee rubbing across the painting. If a melody could be the equivalent of a photograph or a recognizable visual image, then what I was doing was kind of smearing the paint around, and at times other people in the group were doing that as well, but there was always some underlying structure that was more carefully worked out.

How did you go about writing the music? Were David's notes at the forefront of your mind, or did you let your experience of the paintings take its own course? Did you do much composing on the guitar?

The writing came very late, very close to the actual recording, and at that point, David's notes weren't in the forefront at all—they'd become another aspect of what I was accumulating in my mind. I was influenced a lot by watching a video of Richter, seeing what he looked like and hearing his voice, and seeing the kind of humility he had about what he was doing, which doesn't always come across in reading about him. Reading some interviews, I had kind of a different idea about what he might feel like as a person, but in the video I could see the struggle he was going through more clearly. So all these different things were floating around, but when it finally comes down to talking about how I write music I never know how to explain it. For some of it I wrote melodies down on paper, some of it I did on guitar. I always write



858-5
Abstract Picture, 1999
oil on aluminum, 50 x 72 cm

more than I need and edit it down. I guess my own personal process of writing music is probably not that related to what Richter does, but I tried to make the performance of what I had written closer to what he does. It's such a personal thing when I'm writing, I don't know what's happening really, and for all the analysis and talk about Richter I'm sure that what's going through his mind as he paints—it's him alone going through what he's dealing with and no one knows. I was thinking about him and the paintings, but it still came down to the truth that my own life has to come out somehow.

How did things change once you got together with the other musicians? Was much of the music worked out in rehearsal? Was much of it left to the recording session? (I understand the session went much faster than David had expected.) Had any of the other musicians seen the paintings?

We had two full days of rehearsal at my house, the whole group and David, and then a big part of a third day playing the music in the studio while everything was being set up and checked for the recording. Again, this was luxurious. We had really good prints of the paintings all around us which David had brought back from Italy, where the book had just been printed. Jenny had also seen the actual paintings, in San Francisco, but Hank and Eyvind hadn't seen them. After the rehearsal, we were really ready to just do it when we got to the studio—and it felt like the whole thing was done in one big stroke. That just seems like what was supposed to happen. As I remember, we recorded the pieces in sequence: it was like we'd been rehearsing for a concert or an athletic event and we just went for it. Because we were recording live we had to make sure the balance was okay, and it was kind of intense for everyone, including Joe Ferla, our engineer. The sound of it is the way we sounded in the room: we were set up close together, so that we could all hear each other. We did

not have to use headphones. But it's true that it went much faster than David expected—he booked three days and we ended up making the whole record in like ten hours. And that included this siesta in the middle—everyone took a long walk in the late afternoon and then we all had this big Mexican dinner—and came back to the studio and finished.

Have you had other ideas about music for this group and if so is it going to be a continuation of the direction established by RICHTER 858, or a departure into other areas?

I got really excited about playing with this combination of people—they're all my number one choice of people to play with on these instruments, and we ended up doing a couple of concerts after the recording. At the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, at the close of the big Richter retrospective in January '03, we played the music for the paintings, as part of a concert with a bunch of the poets who'd written poems for the book. But then in Seattle we did a full-length concert where by arranging some of my other music and writing some new music I came up with another 45 minutes for the group. I have a new album that's just come out (*Unspeakable*) where I wrote string arrangements on some of the songs for these three musicians to play. But I'm looking forward to just playing as a real group. We'd play the Richter music, but it's already started to grow into something else. It allows me to write for strings, and since these are my really close friends I can take a lot of chances. It's not like the kind of pressure I'd feel if I were writing for the Emerson String Quartet or something. The whole process has been a great learning experience for me, an opportunity to stretch.

Another really nice thing about this project—the people. I've known Hank since 1975, but we hadn't played together for eleven or twelve years and this gave us a chance to reconnect. Hank was in the first band I ever had on my own. We've always been really close, but he moved to Ithaca around the time I moved to Seattle and he didn't want to travel as much. I hadn't even seen him for probably ten years, but it just felt like only a couple days had gone by once we started playing.

I met Eyvind in Edmonton when he was still a student there—he was a volunteer at a club called Yardbird Suite where I was playing. A couple of years later I'd moved to Seattle and I was walking down the street and saw this guy who looked familiar. Anyway we started talking, and soon after that we started playing a lot. First we'd get together just the two of us at my house, then I put this quartet together with Ron Miles and Curtis Fowlkes. He's been in several different incarnations of my bands.

I met Jenny more recently, but she knew Eyvind and Hank, and there was this mutual respect thing going among all of them. Over the last two or three years Jenny and I have done so many different things together. Whatever the context and the music, she's totally there.



858-6

Abstract Picture, 1999

oil on aluminum, 50 x 72 cm

FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID BRESKIN BY LILY PRILLINGER (SEPTEMBER 2002)

The musical component of RICHTER 858 really complements the shimmering, lustrous terrain of these pictures. What were the qualities of Bill Frisell's compositions that led you to anticipate his mastery of, and his desire to be involved with, this type of project, and how does his work style relate to the texture and density of these paintings?

I wouldn't focus so much on the word "composition" as I would emphasize the idea of "playing." My attraction to Frisell wasn't because of his compositional style so much as his relationship with the instrument, particularly the electric guitar. What Richter does with paint in these abstractions I think Frisell does by analog with music, with sound. Well, what does Frisell do with sound, particularly with the electric guitar? He shapes it. He torques it. He inverts it—he reverses it in time, things come backwards. He modulates pitch. He changes tunings. When I consider all the improvisers that I know or all the kinds of master musicians, he has a relationship to the guitar when producing sound that is closer to Richter's relationship to producing abstract paintings than anyone else. He uses all these rack-mounted devices, uses all these signal-processing devices to take his original sound—comparing that to Richter's original surface of paint on a canvas—and transform it. Of course, Bill is doing it in real time. We did no overdubbing or editing. For instance, Bill may play a phrase and put it through one of his delay units and then the sound comes back, changed—and it keeps changing. There is so much uncertainty in that. Actually it is very similar to Richter, in the sense that Richter knows well the effects he can get from running the squeegee over a wet section of paint or over a fairly dry area that has wet paint on top of it, just like Bill knows the effects he can achieve by feeding a certain series of notes into his delay, and then

letting them come back and then playing over them. And yet neither Richter nor Frisell have perfect or total control of the process, and things happen which they can't predict.

I also felt there were other aspects that were not particularly analogous to Richter, but I felt they would be more surprising than say, what Steve Reich or Philip Glass might do. I think both of them have great relevance to Richter and it's not a surprise to me that Richter and Steve Reich are interested in each other and that Richter has now done a project (*City Life*) that is an homage to Steve Reich. But I sort of know what that music may have sounded like before hearing the music. With Frisell, I didn't know. In fact, what he's been doing in the last few years has been much more in the direction of Americana—with lap steel guitars, with banjos, and all sorts of stuff. You know, one of my early phrases to Bill was: "No Banjos For Richter!" Anything that would have had a vernacular feeling would have been anachronistic, because the paintings don't feel vernacular at all. They just feel contemporary. If the music felt like a swampy blues, it would have felt wrong. Although, there is this sequence where the viola and the violin together sound very much like a harmonica. It's strange and it caught me by surprise.

Another aspect of my interest in Bill was reflected in my initial notes to Bill: that the music should involve investigations "deep into the language of electric guitar." We were going to use strings but I didn't want it to feel like a 19th Century string quartet. The three strings are quite acoustic—nothing electronic going on with them. So we were setting up this formal structure where you have the strings stand in for some classical order or European tradition. Let's look at it like European concert music: cello, viola, violin—suddenly up against electric guitar, specifically in the language that Frisell is using. So you have this modernity if you will (or you could say "post-modernity")—this modernity that is against, inside, and around these strings. We considered this tension even in the way that we did the live mix. The cello was slightly left, the viola was in the middle, the violin was to the right and the guitar is through all of them. It's farther left,



858-7

Abstract Picture, 1999

oil on aluminum, 50 x 72 cm

it's farther right—and it's all underneath and on top without being louder. I wanted those other instruments swimming in, and up against that guitar, which has a very different sound and arrives with a very different envelope than those string instruments.

Another reason we recorded those strings in such a way was to create a real intimacy. This "intimacy" is the equivalent of very close looking at a painting. This approach contrasts with the situational aspects of a "normal" string quartet up on stage at Carnegie Hall, where you might be sitting in the 33rd row; it may feel so perfectly preserved and sounds as such that it could be 1878. In the recording we were trying to make the punishment fit the crime. We wanted there to be a very strong presence so that one almost feels as though you are sitting in the middle of the string quartet, as opposed to being part of the audience listening in the 33rd row. You hear the string sounds of the instruments, you hear the breathing of the players at some moments. You can hear the wood. Maybe this proximity is a little uncomfortable at times—and that's okay. Without it being a hyper-presence, we were trying to create a super-presence. We were trying to make it very tactile in the way the paintings are. I mean the paintings are not Rothkos. They are not ethereal in the same way. We wanted the recording to feel like these paintings, not another set of paintings.

Your "Notes Towards Structure and Aesthetics" that you prepared and gave to Bill Frisell prior to his composition process were intensely playful, yet disciplined and earnest in their attention to detail...

Well, those sorts of working notes were more specific than I would prepare if I were just making a "normal" record. I have worked with Bill before. I did a record with him in 1984 with Vernon Reid (*Smash and Scatteration*) and in 1987 with Ronald Shannon Jackson and Melvin Gibbs (*Power Tools, Strange Meeting*). I didn't want to put him in a straitjacket, but I felt it would be better if we had some ground rules. He had

indicated to me that he was wanting some kind of dialogue with me about the work—mostly to help him frame what the possibilities would be. Part of my interest in doing the notes was shaped by my experience in July 2001 producing the recording of Bobby Previte's *The 23 Constellations of Joan Miró*. I learned a lot about specificity, about framework. There were certainly similarities between the projects, as well as differences, but I thought it would be constructive to get Bill thinking about the architecture of Richter's work in the ways that Previte had thought about the architecture of the Miró work. I mean, it is confounding: music and images. Music is so abstract. It is, by far, the most abstract art that we have.

In your notes for Frisell you posed some questions for him to consider with regard to his musical interpretation of the pieces.

There is a fascination that is aroused by radically different art forms like painting and music and how one makes analogies, or analogs, that investigate how space operates in both, how time operates in both, and how different they are. Well, what do you get out of those differences? So yeah, we were making analogs but not building them as purely literal versions. That would have been too slavish. Then I think we would have been getting into more of a translation problem, as opposed to transforming the paintings into music. How is this painting emotionally, intellectually, and psychologically—triggering its own thing? How do we make the work that comes from the Richter work not dependent on it? It's its own work that stands there with it. It is not an echo of the Richter work. It's a dialogue. This project is not simply a response to the work, because a response suggests an "answer" in a way. A dialogue is not an answer—it's a give and take. It should have a life of its own.



858-8

Abstract Picture, 1999
oil on linen, 51 x 47 cm

858 QUARTET

BILL FRISELL GUITARS AND ELECTRONICS

JENNY SCHEINMAN VIOLIN

EYVIND KANG VIOLA

HANK ROBERTS CELLO

1 858-1 7:54

2 858-2 3:12

3 858-3 4:10

5 858-4 8:55

5 858-5 4:32

6 858-6 6:36

7 858-7 6:26

8 858-8 2:25

TOTAL TIME 44:44

MUSIC COMPOSED AND ARRANGED BY BILL FRISELL,

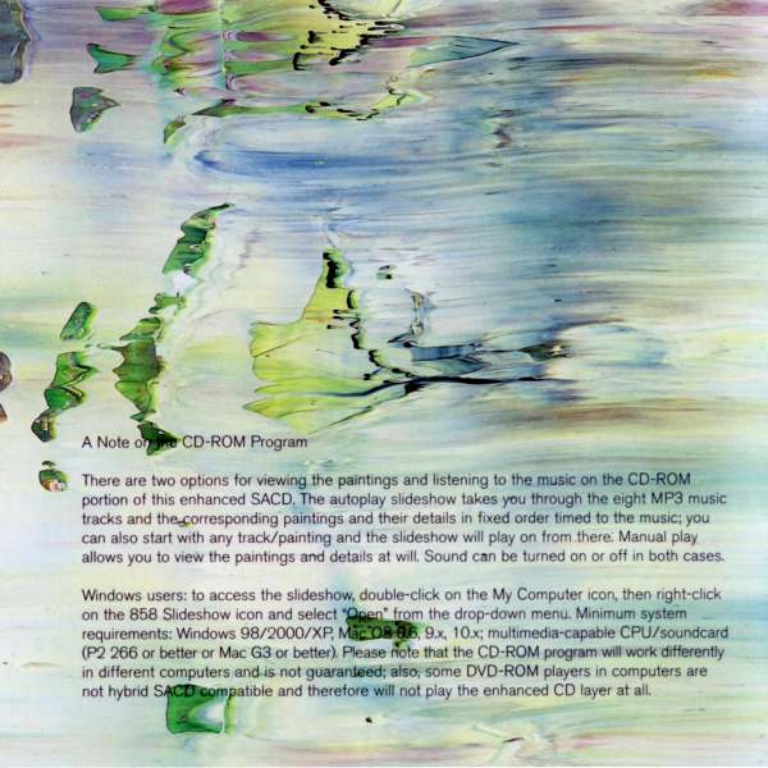
PUBLISHED BY FRIZ-TONE MUSIC / BMI

RECORDED BY JOE FERLA

MASTERED BY JOE GASTWIRT

PRODUCED BY DAVID BRESKIN

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: TONY REIF

An abstract painting of a pond scene. The water is depicted with soft, blended strokes of light blue, green, and yellow. Several lily pads, in various shades of green, float on the water's surface. A small, dark-colored frog is visible on the left side, partially submerged. The overall style is impressionistic and serene.

A Note on the CD-ROM Program

There are two options for viewing the paintings and listening to the music on the CD-ROM portion of this enhanced SACD. The autoplay slideshow takes you through the eight MP3 music tracks and the corresponding paintings and their details in fixed order timed to the music; you can also start with any track/painting and the slideshow will play on from there. Manual play allows you to view the paintings and details at will. Sound can be turned on or off in both cases.

Windows users: to access the slideshow, double-click on the My Computer icon, then right-click on the 858 Slideshow icon and select "Open" from the drop-down menu. Minimum system requirements: Windows 98/2000/XP, Mac OS 9.5, 9.x, 10.x; multimedia-capable CPU/soundcard (P2 266 or better or Mac G3 or better). Please note that the CD-ROM program will work differently in different computers and is not guaranteed; also, some DVD-ROM players in computers are not hybrid SACD compatible and therefore will not play the enhanced CD layer at all.

Gerhard Richter's *Abstract Pictures*, 1999 (858-1, 858-2, 858-3, 858-4, 858-5, 858-6, 858-7, and 858-8) are in the permanent collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the partial and promised gift of anonymous donors in honor of the artist. Paintings ©1999 Gerhard Richter

Recorded live to two-track (1 inch, 30 ips) by Joe Ferla at Studio Litho, Seattle, assisted by David Fisher, on July 20, 2002

Mastered by Joe Gastwirt using the HDCD system on July 24, 2002, and mastered for DSD on April 29, 2004, at Joe's Mastering Joint, Oak Park, California. DSD Engineer: Lon Neumann

CD-ROM design by Dan Jackson and programming by Rich McMullan, Union Arts, Vancouver

Graphic Design by Eli Bornowsky

A true collaborative potlatch, the collective efforts and spirited good will of many, many people made the RICHTER 858 project and this recording possible. Special kudos to: Gerhard Richter, Dean Young, Bill Frisell, Tony Reif, Joe Ferla, Massimo Tonoli, Tony Meier, Joe Gastwirt and Ron Saint Germain—all spectacular human beings. Deepest thanks also to my family for their help—Isabel, Thelonious Blue, and Billie Miro Breskin. —db

Special thanks to Gus Skinas and the Sony SACD Project

This recording was first released on CD as part of the limited-edition book RICHTER 858, published by The Shifting Foundation / SFMOMA (San Francisco, 2002), ISBN 0-9718610-0-5.

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Bill Frisell appears courtesy of Nonesuch Records.

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RICHTER 858 MUSIC OF BILL FRISSELL SGL SA1551-2

RICHTER 858 MUSIC OF BILL FRISSELL SGL SA1551-2

858 QUARTET

BILL FRISSELL GUITARS AND ELECTRONICS

HANK ROBERTS CELLO

JENNY SCHEINMAN VIOLIN

EYVIND KANG VIOLA

COMPOSITIONS BY BILL FRISSELL INSPIRED BY EIGHT

ABSTRACT PICTURES BY GERHARD RICHTER

PRODUCED BY DAVID BRESKIN

Live to two-track analogue recording mastered to HDCD & DSD. This stereo Hybrid SACD can be played on any standard compact disc player. The CD layer includes a CD-ROM program of the paintings and selected details (PC/Mac compatible).



SGL SA1551-2



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