



Brad Shepik Ron Samworth  
Quartet 1991



Brad Shepik, electric guitar (l. channel)  
Ron Samworth, electric guitar (r. channel)  
Phil Sparks, bass  
Michael Sarin, drums

Archive series, volume 1  
Previously unreleased

- |                 |      |
|-----------------|------|
| 1. Confluenza   | 5:23 |
| 2. Terrestrials | 5:10 |
| 3. Bent House   | 5:44 |
| 4. Circa        | 5:02 |
| 5. Nightbirds   | 6:08 |
| 6. PLAW         | 6:02 |
| 7. Ramblin'     | 5:03 |
| 8. Way In       | 2:59 |
| 9. Song of Then | 9:30 |

Total time: 51:36

SGL 1616-2  
C & P 2016 Songlines Recordings



Analogue recording mixed in 24 bits/192K



tracks 2,8

1, 3, 4, 6, 9 composed by Brad Shepik, Felijar Music/BMI; 2, 8 by Ron Samworth, SOCAN; 5 by Robin Holcomb, Other Room Music/ASCAP; 7 by Ornette Coleman, Phrase Text Music/ASCAP

Recorded August 27-28, 1991 by Jay Follette at Ironwood Studio, Seattle  
Transferred to digital by Eric Mosher at The Warehouse Studio, Vancouver  
Mixed summer 2015 by Erik Nielsen at Afterlife Studio, Vancouver  
Mastered by Graemme Brown at Zen Mastering, Gabriola Island, BC

Produced by Tony Reif

Cover photo and design by Jordan Bent  
Shepik photo: Steve Robinson

Many new and belated thanks to Ron, Brad, Michael and Phil for coming up with this music and for agreeing to release it, as well as to Erik Nielsen, John Raham, Paul Dutil and Steve Robinson.

This is the first recording I ever produced, and as it turned out it was a far from auspicious beginning for Songlines. Ron and Brad had met at the Banff jazz workshop in 1987, and in April 1990 they played together in Vancouver at the old Glass Slipper on Main St. (where the first Songlines release, François Houle's Hacienda, was recorded live in March 1992). Everyone agreed the gig went great, and eventually, in August 1991, a two-day session took place at a good studio in Seattle, with Seattle's Phil Sparks on upright bass and Brad's friend Michael Sarin, who Ron had also performed with, on drums. There was a rehearsal day with some new and more difficult pieces from Brad (unfortunately we lost six hours to a guitar equipment malfunction), followed by two days of hard work. Things definitely didn't go as well as expected. When the dust cleared and everyone had had a chance to evaluate the rough mixes from the session, the consensus was that it was a good demo but not releasable. There were big issues with the playing of some of the composed material - I clearly had no idea what I was doing in the studio and hadn't called for retakes to fix those problems, and Ron and Brad didn't have a lot more experience than I did. Overall it was felt that the playing didn't have the requisite ease and polish to do the music justice.

I thought about setting up another session if I could generate real interest from a label, and sent out cassettes of the rough mixes to a bunch of labels including Blue Note, BMG, Verve, Sony, Antilles, Axiom, Nonesuch, ECM, CMP and Enja. I got one nice rejection note saying there was much to admire in the work, but that was it. So things were on hold. And when Brad brought me rough mixes of the first BABKAS recording, the Seattle-New York trio he'd formed with Briggan Krauss and Aaron Alexander, and asked if I was interested, and when it was released on Songlines in '93, the Shepik/Samworth session faded into the realm of might-have-been.

The sad part was, I'd really loved the sound of those two guitars together and a lot of the pieces that Brad and Ron brought to the session - almost none of which were subsequently recorded (though "PLAW", originally titled "Suburban Fear", is on that first BABKAS CD). Over the years I would occasionally pull out the cassette and listen to it again - even after I'd released other projects of Brad's, and Ron's Talking Pictures CD Humming, and Jerry Granelli's great two-guitar band V16. Then in late 2014, after a break of quite a few years, I listened to it once more with a question in mind: could I finally consign this music to the dustbin, or was it worth seeing if it could be rescued? No one had ever gone back to the original 2" multitracks to determine whether digital editing could deal with the heads. So I had the tapes baked and transferred to high-res digital. And it turns out, rather surprisingly, that there was in fact effective isolation of the guitar amps from each other and from the bass and drum mics, even though everyone had been set up in the main room. So, thanks to the magic of Protools, the heads were made presentable. And as engineer Erik Nielsen and I got into the mixing we became more and more enthusiastic about the spirit and pluck of the playing. Certainly there are divergent or indecisive moments in the guitar interaction, but many other moments of beauty, grandeur and sweep, and Michael's bold/subtle drumming goes a long way toward knitting it all together. For me it was like a time capsule from another world, its now fully revealed sounds fresher than ever. This rock-drenched, downtown NYC-influenced jazz, so different from the emotionally sterile fusion of the '80s, also evidently drew inspiration from Bill Frisell and John Scofield (and especially Marc Johnson's Bass Desires band where they played together), but it has its own particular character - not fully worked out, but still a part of the history of guitar jazz that's worth knowing.

Tony Reif