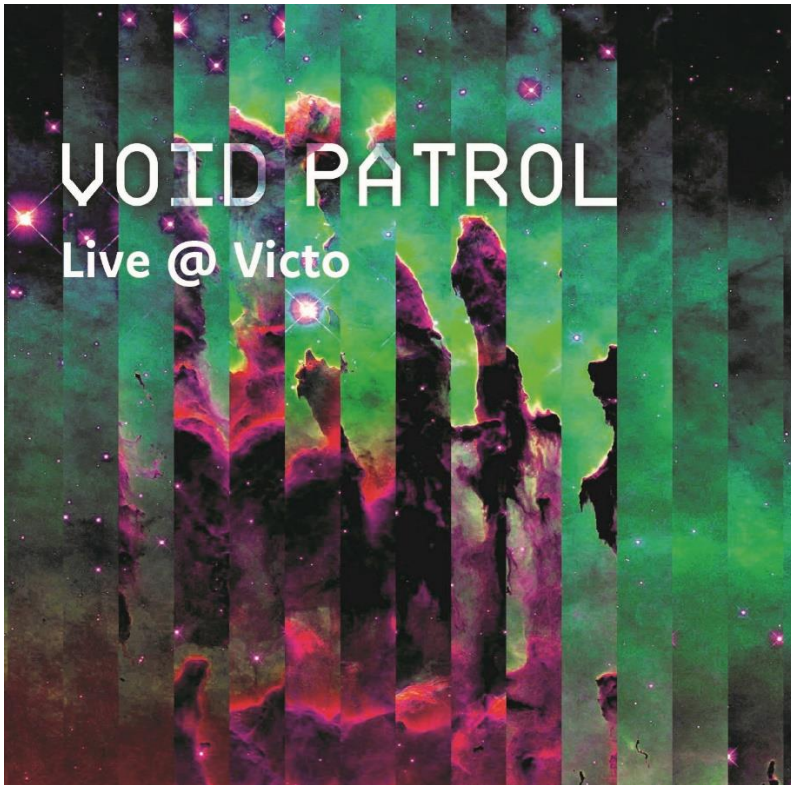




Void Patrol (Sharp / Stetson / Martin / MacDonald)
Live @ Victo
(Victo)

By Andrey Henkin
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That Void Patrol is the best all-star, dark-toned, jazz-adjacent band since the equally intriguingly named DKRWV debuted on record back in 2015 is perhaps no surprise, since there is a shared taproot in Medeski, Martin and Wood (MMW), with John Medeski part of the latter and Billy Martin anchoring the former.

The group was established by Payton MacDonald, who plays all manner of idiophones and works mostly in the field of new music. Alongside him is the ever-flexible Martin, plus two remarkably strong musical personalities in guitarist/electronicist Elliott Sharp and bass/tenor/alto saxophonist Colin Stetson (MMW had included a MacDonald piece on its 2015 recording *Omnisphere* and MacDonald had both played with Sharp and recorded albums of his compositions). Their first album came out in 2022 on Infrequent Seams and the band debuted live at Brooklyn's Sultan Room (this writer in attendance). The following year saw them invited to the 39th edition of the Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville in Canada, this document of same put out by the festival's house label Victo earlier this year.

As with the first album, the segments of this 71-minute, fully improvised performance are all named for stars, the theme extended by a manipulated photo of the Crab Nebula on the cover. The conceit is not an artificial one. This is serious space music: the groaning of black holes, sizzle of cosmic rays, crack of birthing galaxies, mating calls of hitherto undiscovered interstellar leviathans. More terrestrially, the band juxtaposes the processed sounds of guitar and saxophone (if you have not heard Stetson's processed solo recitals, do so) against the deep reverberations of the percussion. While highly abstract, it is Martin's metricality that helps ground the proceedings, making it less about typical free jazz peaks and valleys and more about wave-form undulations. MacDonald's playing, far from any jazz language, adds a flavor of minimalism — Steve Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians* distilled down — to this maximalist outfit.

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