

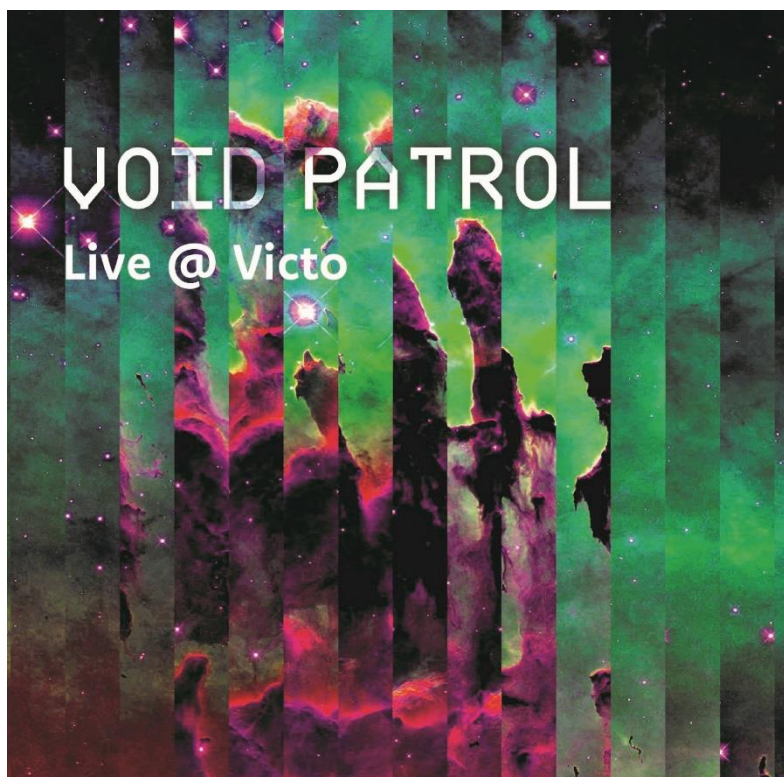


VOID PATROL with ELLIOTT SHARP / COLIN STETSON / BILLY MARTIN / PAYTON MacDONALD - Live @ Victo

(Les Disques Victo CD 136; Quebec, Canada)

Bruce Gallanter

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Void Patrol is Elliott Sharp on electric guitar & electronics, Colin Stetson bass, tenor & alto saxes, Billy Martin on drums & percussion and Payton MacDonald on marimba, vibes & gyil (African xylophone). The first Void Patrol disc was released in 2022 and was recorded during the pandemic. Percussionist Payton MacDonald conceived the music and recorded his parts in a home studio and had Elliott Sharp, Billy Martin and Colin Stetson record their parts on their own, sending MacDonald the results to put together as a finished project/session. I hadn't heard of Mr. MacDonald before receiving that disc in the mail from the Infrequent Seams label. This method of recording the different musicians separately doesn't always work but I found the disc to be pretty great nonetheless. I was glad to see that Void Patrol were playing at FIMAV last year and thought that their set was pretty great. It was also different from the first effort since all four members were recording live together on a large stage at Le Carre 150 in Victoriaville, Quebec.

Although all four members of this quartet come from much different backgrounds, live they sounded like they had been playing together for many years. I remain a big fan of Elliott Sharp, Colin Stetson and Billy Martin, since each once excels at different projects which often cross barriers and genres. From what I remember most of the pieces started off with Mr. MacDonald playing a riff on one of his percussion instruments (mostly xylophone or marimba-like). "Canis Major" starts with Mr. Sharp's unique muted strumming and it is soon joined by the gyil (which looks like a balaphon to me). Mr. Sharp is soon playing some sly bluesy, slide guitar licks as MacDonald sets the groove and Mr. Stetson soon joins them on sax. Most of the six pieces are long and unfold slowly. Percussion master Billy Martin switches between doubling up the percussion parts and adding cross-current drums or hand percussion punctuation. Mr. Sharp is a virtuosic guitarist who can rock hard and play the blues with conviction, but here he lays back and adds more subtle sounds on both guitar and electronics. At times, the quartet does erupt with some roaring, throttling sounds which are played by Mr. Stetson saxes (usually his large bass sax) or Sharp's biting guitar. There are also a number of sections featuring both percussionists playing layers of connected parts, sometimes moving in waves together. Since the entire concert was mostly continuous, Mr. Payton often played a segway on his balaphon or marimba. Stetson's sax and E Sharp's guitar play a theme together at times, creating lines or streams which flow through the center of the quartet providing a flow. Mr. Stetson circular breathes his lines creating a hypnotic stream which provides us with a wave to ride or soar upon. I recall thinking this entire set was strong, spirited and inventive throughout its length and listening to this disc I am convinced at how well it worked out. Extraordinary.