

The Music Outpost Promotion

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Artist: **PHILLIP JOHNSTON & THE COOLERATORS**

Album: **DIGGIN' BONES** Genre: **Jazz**

Label & Catalogue #: **Asynchronous 003**

Release Date: **September 2018**

Phillip Johnston & the Coolerators: *Diggin' Bones* (Asynchronous 003)



Diggin' Bones Down Under:

NY Jazz Composer & Saxophonist Phillip Johnston (Microscopic Septet) Joins Forces in Australia with Bassist Lloyd Swanton (The Necks), Organist Alister Spence & Drummer Nic Cecire to Coolerate a New Sound & Release an Animated Album

When composer / saxophonist / bandleader **Phillip Johnston**, leader of New York's legendary jazz ensemble **The Microscopic Septet**, moved from the Big Apple to Sydney, he assembled several of Australia's best musicians – **Alister Spence**, **Lloyd Swanton**, **Nic Cecire** – and began brewing a distinctive and lively Down Under ensemble. The Sydney-based **Phillip Johnston & the Coolerators** now releases its first album, *Diggin' Bones*, whose unique sound combines funky organ combo jazz with modernist jazz composition, including a touch of klezmer. Produced by **The Necks'** Lloyd Swanton and featuring some of Australia's finest jazz/multi-genre improvisers, *Diggin' Bones* shows a new side of Johnston's music.

The Coolerators brings together two of Australia's most internationally acclaimed touring musicians, Alister Spence (**Alister Spence Trio**, **Clarion Fracture Zone**, **AAO**) and Lloyd Swanton (**The Necks**, **the catholics**) with one of Sydney's most in-demand rhythm section players, Nic Cecire. The music covers a range of styles but avant organ jazz is at the centre of it.

Johnston has led **Phillip Johnston & the Coolerators** since 2005, alongside several other live performance and recording projects, including Sydney's **Greasy Chicken Orchestra** and New York's **Microscopic Septet**, and while extensively touring with *Wordless!*, his multi-media theatrical collaboration with illustrator **Art Spiegelman** and the band **The Silent Six**. But beginning in 2018, while still involved in those other projects, Johnston began focussing on the Coolerators as his main vehicle for live performance.

Diggin' Bones adds a new chapter to Johnston's extensive discography, which began in 1983 with The Micros' *Take The Z Train*. His most recent previous releases include numerous CDs on **Cuneiform Records** by **The Microscopic Septet** (with co-composer **Joel Forrester**) and **Fast 'N' Bulbous** (a **Captain Beefheart** tribute band that he co-leads with **Gary Lucas**). All of these releases have been widely and exceptionally reviewed (all receiving 4 stars in *Downbeat*) and received many Best of the Year critical listings.

Many of Johnston's releases feature exemplary art work by notable illustrators, including **Art Spiegelman** and **Barry Blitt**, among others, and *Diggin' Bones* is no exception, featuring art and cover design by **Keith LoBue**. Both groovy and cerebral, the Coolerators play animated and funky dance music for a cartoon universe.

The label **Asynchronous** is releasing Phillip Johnston and the Coolerators' *Diggin' Bones* simultaneously with another Phillip Johnston album, *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*, a soundtrack that Johnston composed for the world's first feature-length animated film, a 1926 silhouette animation by female film pioneer **Lotte Reiniger**. In addition to Johnston, two of the five musicians on the *Prince Achmed* soundtrack album are members of The Coolerators: Nic Cecire and Alister Spence. Johnston has composed, recorded, and performed live numerous soundtracks for silent film. He has also published writings and presented conference papers on the subject. In addition, Johnston is author of 'Jazzin' The Silents: Jazz and Improvised Music in Contemporary Scores for Silent Film' for the upcoming/2019 book, *When Jazz meets Cinema*, edited by **Emilio Audissino** and **Emile Wennekes** (Brepols: Turnhout, Belgium).

WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID

about Phillip Johnston's music:

"An exceptionally individualistic composer and superb improviser..." –The New Yorker

"seminal, brilliant post-modern jazz" –Downbeat Magazine

"Saxophonist/composer Phillip Johnston's music embodies all that's good about jazz. It's honest, original, and inspired, above and beyond the typical. It's also some of the smartest and best-humored music to have found a home under the jazz banner." –Jazziz

about The Coolerators:

"...consummate musical artists, they present a unique style of jazz performance that is relaxed, smooth, and eloquent with phrasing that bursts forth intricate improvisations in jazz and swing with a splattering of funk that is all class - for the uninitiated and jazz aficionados alike a delight to imbibe." – Peter McGill, SoundPet

"It is jazz played with some true wit... freely drawing on all styles of music to create quirky, cartoonish pieces, coloured with chirpy melodies and unexpected moments of poignancy." –John Shand, Sydney Morning Herald

VIDEO CLIPS OF THE COOLERATORS

Frankly – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSOptuUQY_0

Ghosts (Aylor) – <https://vimeo.com/233168088>

PHILLIP JOHNSTON & THE COOLERATORS – BIOS

Phillip Johnston: soprano/alto saxophone

Alister Spence: organ

Lloyd Swanton: bass

Nick Cecire: drums



PHILLIP JOHNSTON (Soprano/Alto Saxophone) Official website: Facebook: Twitter"

Phillip Johnston is an American jazz musician, saxophone player, bandleader and prolific composer who divides his time between Sydney and New York. He is best known for his legendary, long-running ensemble, **The Microscopic Septet** (with co-composer **Joel Forrester**), whose music encapsulates the essence of a century of NYC jazz; his other acclaimed NY bands **Fast 'N' Bulbous** (co-led with guitarist **Gary Lucas**), **Big Trouble**, and **The Transparent Quartet**; and his duos with **Guy Klucevsek** and **Joel Forrester**.

As a composer, he has composed theatre music for the **Public Theatre**, and **Bell Shakespeare Company**, and film music for **Paul Mazursky**, **Doris Dörrie**, **Henry Bean** and **Philip Haas**; his silent film scores have been performed at the **New York Film Festival**, across Europe, and at the **Sydney Film Festival**, **Melbourne Festival** and **Revelation Perth Film Festival**. His multi-media collaboration with graphic artist **Art Spiegelman**, *Wordless!*, premiered at the **Sydney Opera House** on 5 October 2013 and made a nine-city tour of North America after its 18 January 2014 US debut at the **Brooklyn Academy of Music**. Featuring silent films and animation, spoken word by Spiegelman, and music by Johnston and his ensemble **The Silent Six**, *Wordless!* was performed at the 2016 **London Jazz Festival**, **Buenos Aires' ComiCópolis**, and the **Philharmonie de Paris**, and continues to tour worldwide.

Since his move to Australia in 2005, Johnston has released four CDs of new recordings with **The Microscopic Septet** (in addition to the 4-CD 2007 reissue set *History of the Micros*), all on **Cuneiform Records**; the most recent of the Micros' recordings is 2017's *Been Up So Long It Looks Like Down To Me*. While in Australia, Johnston also released two albums with **Fast 'N' Bulbous** (Cuneiform), three silent film scores, and CDs with **The Spokes**, & **SNAP** (Australian saxophone quartet), in addition to creating five film scores, and composing numerous works for Australian theatre. He's performed live in the US with The Microscopic Septet (whose annual performances have become a tradition) and done festival appearances WHERE/ WITH WHO?. In 20??, he served a coveted one-week residency at **John Zorn's The Stone** in New York City, in which he curated a series of shows and performed in ensembles ranging from duos to septets. In Australia, he performs live with The Coolerators and other ensembles [who / when].

ALISTER SPENCE (Organ/Keyboards) Official website: <http://www.alisterspence.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/alister.spence.7> | Instagram: @alisterspence

Pianist and composer Spence is one of the leading lights in contemporary original jazz and improvised music in Australia. The **Alister Spence Trio** has enjoyed critical acclaim both nationally and internationally, being nominated twice for *Best*

Australian Jazz Album at the ARIA Awards (2004/2007). He is also a founding member of **Clarion Fracture Zone**, **Wanderlust** and **The Australian Art Orchestra**.

Alister has toured extensively over the last 25 years, performing in countries such as U.S.A., Canada, Japan, U.K., Germany, Russia and India with the **Alister Spence Trio/Quartet**, **Sensaround**, **Clarion Fracture Zone**, **Wanderlust**, and the **Australian Art Orchestra**. He has recorded duo projects with Scottish sax player **Raymond MacDonald** (*Stepping Between the Shadows*, **Rufus Records**, 2012), US pianist **Myra Melford** (*Everything Here Is Possible*, 2014, **Alister Spence Music**, winner **APRA/AMCOS Art Music Award 2014**). He has also performed in Japan and Australia with celebrated pianist and good friend, **Satoko Fujii**. In 2014 **Sensaround** (**Spence, MacDonald, Ahmad**) launched their electro-acoustic trio and released *Isotropes*. In 2015 Alister released a trio CD, *Begin* with **Joe Williamson** (double bass, CAN/SWE) and **Christopher Cantillo** (drums, SWE): nominated for **APRA/AMCOS Art Music Award 2015**. He has been touring and playing with **Joe and Christopher** (and also **Raymond MacDonald**) in Europe since 2009.

LLOYD SWANTON (Bass, Producer) Official website(s) <thenecks.com>, <buglerecords.com>
Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100012155824756>

Swanton is a three-time winner of **Best Bassist in the Australian Jazz and Blues Awards** and has co-led the Australian improvising trio **The Necks** with **Chris Abrahams** and **Tony Buck** since 1987, who **Geoff Dyer** recently called, “*the greatest trio on Earth*,” in a *New York Times Magazine* feature story. They have released 18 CDs and tour widely in Europe, the US and Australia.

Described by *Billboard Magazine* as “an outstanding and imaginative Australian bassist and composer”, his long-running group, **The Catholics**, has released eight albums, all produced and predominantly composed by him, with three receiving **ARIA Award nominations**. Their album *Simple* was nominated for the **German Deutsche Schallplattenkritik Award**.

His 12-part suite *Ambon*, drawing from his uncle Stuart's secret diary kept whilst a prisoner of war in World War II, had its premiere in 2015, and is now released as a double CD. Overseas exposure in nearly 40 countries with numerous groups includes countless performances throughout Europe, Canada, the USA, Mexico, India, Cuba, New Zealand, Taiwan, South Korea, Russia, Indonesia, Thailand and Japan.

Swanton has performed with **The Benders**, **Clarion Fracture Zone**, **Sydney Symphony**, **Vince Jones**, **Alpha Centauri Ensemble**, the **Mighty Reapers**, the **Seymour Group**, **Tim Finn**, **Stephen Cummings** and **Wendy Matthews**. He was also a long-serving member of the **Bernie McGann Trio** and the **Bernie McGann Quartet**. International artists with whom he has performed throughout Australia include **Dewey Redman**, **Nat Adderly**, **Clifford Jordan**, **Vincent Herring**, **Sting**, **Jimmy Witherspoon**, **Margie Evans**, **Sheila Jordan**, **Billy Harper**, **Barney Kessel**, **Andrew Hill**, **George Coleman Jr.**, **John Hicks & Carlos Ward**, **Darrell Grant**, **Gary Bartz**, **Phillip Johnston**, **Jim Black**, **Tobias Delius** and **Marilyn Crispell**.

NIC CECIRE (Drums) Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/nic.cecire>
Instagram #niccecire

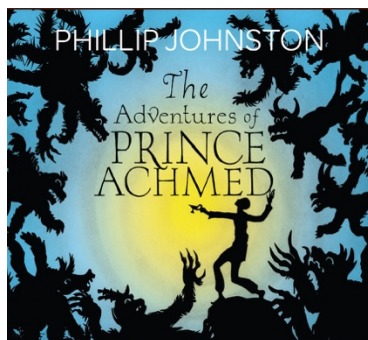
Nic Cecire has performed and/or recorded with **James Morrison**, **Mike Nock**, **Lily Dior**, **The Whitlams**, **Jenny Morris**, **The Coolerators/ Phillip Johnston Septet**, **Greg Coffin Trio**, **James Valentine Quartet**, **Kristen Berardi**, **Virna Sanzone**, **Trish Delaney-Brown**, **Nicky Crayson**, **Dave MacRae/Joy Yates**, **Lloyd Swanton** (the Catholics/Ambon), **Darren Percival**, **Jim Mogine** (Midnight Oil), **Tina Harrod**, **Christine Anu**, **Grace Knight**, **Monica Trapaga**, **Bri Cowlshaw**, **Sean Coffin**, **Jeremy Sawkins Trio**, **Boy George/Culture Club**, **The Sonic Mayhem Big Band**, **The Dan Barnett Big Band**, **Sydney Jazz Orchestra**, **Monsieur Camembert**, and Australian post punk band **Tactics**.

In 2012 he was invited to record the album *Detours* in the Chicago with renowned French pianist **Dominique Fillon**, and long time **Pat Metheny** bassist, **Steve Rodby**, The trio subsequently toured throughout Asia and Australia.

RECENT RECORDINGS



Phillip Johnston & The Coolerators
Diggin' Bones
(Asynchronous 003)



Phillip Johnston
The Adventures of Prince Achmed
(Asynchronous 004)



The Microscopic Septet
Been Up So Long It Looks Like Down to Me: The Micros Play the Blues
(Cuneiform Rune 425)

Phillip Johnston provided us with these extended notes for *Diggin' Bones*:

The tunes:

“Frankly” – is a tune that embodies the sound of what I’m trying to do with the Coolerators: to combine the sound of funky organ combo jazz with more modernist compositional ideas. One of the main things I love about playing with the Coolerators is these musicians’ comfort level with a wide variety of styles, which is both suitable and absolutely necessary for this music. Their combination of superb musicianship and ever-surprising unique personal styles makes thrilling collaborators. **Alister Spence**’s organ solo is a standout here.

“What Is Real?” – This is a tune that I originally used to play with my band **Phillip Johnston’s Idea** when we played around the wonderfully diverse rock scene in New York in the 1980s. This was an amazing time to be in New York: where an incredible richness of variety flowered in the New York club scene. PJ’s Idea was a very improvisational counterpoint to **The Public Servants**, the more compositionally-oriented No-Wave band I co-led with vocalist **Shelley Hirsch** from 1980-1982. Most of the Idea tunes were simple funky riffs that we used as vehicles for improvisation – and we did this in rock clubs! It was a great time.

“Diggin’ Bones” – Two tunes on this recording were originally recorded on the duo CD I made with **Guy Klucevsek**, **Tales From The Cryptic (Winter & Winter)**. I have subsequently played this one in a number of different settings, varying the soloing from a modal groove to completely free. The Coolerators reinvent it every time we play. It’s been called a klezmer tune, but I don’t really hear it that way. I don’t know what it is, maybe a bitonal multi-world music dance number.

“Temporary Blindness” – is a new tune that I wrote specifically for this recording; it and **“Ducket”** (see trk 10) represent most accurately where a certain facet of my writing is at today. For better or worse, like **“Pipeline”** on the **Transparent Quartet** CD, I feel that these are tunes that only I could have and would have written.

“Later” - I originally invented the main melody here as something to play when I used to play on the street solo on Fisherman’s Wharf in San Francisco in the mid-70s while I waited for my girlfriend to get off work at a jewellery store for tourists. Later I struggled off and on for decades trying to figure out how to make it into a complete tune. This current version, like others from this CD, is one that I’ve found a way to play in different settings.

“The Revenant” (Hurley) – **“The Revenant”** is a tune by **Michael Hurley**, a folk musician and visual artist whose music I have loved since I discovered his LPs **Arm Chair Boogie** and **Hi Fi Snock Uptown** in a used record store in the early 70s. This spooky ballad hails from the record **Wolfways** and has chilling and melancholy lyrics. I try to do it justice to it by translating into a modified ska tune. Lloyd’s beautiful bass solo evokes the spirit of the tale beautifully I think. The version is dedicated to **Anna Volska** who always loved our version of this song.

“Legs Yet” - Is another tune that originated in **Phillip Johnston’s Idea**. There’s almost nothing to it, yet it has a specific sound, rooted in its combination of blues and whole tone scales. That small seed gives rise to a very particular kind of improvisation, which nevertheless is always different in the hands of these creative musicians.

“Trial By Error” – While I love the version I recorded with Guy (see trk3), this tune always wanted to be played by a band as well. Guy and I were in part brought together by our mutual love of counterpoint, which is reflected in this tune, but **Nic Cecire**’s great drumming adds a new level of rhythm to it.

“Regrets #17” – This is a tune that I previously recorded with my 90s band **The Transparent Quartet**. One of my favorite things about the Coolerators is the freedom and spontaneity of our group improvisations, which is why you see that in a number of tunes played here like **“What Is Real?”** and **“Legs Yet”**. This is where the excitement of a live gig is captured on recording.

“Ducket Got A Whole In It” – I end with another tune written specifically for this recording. Why would someone write a tune like this? I will answer by saying that I try to write tunes that have the necessity of motivic improvisation built into them, and I think that you will hear that all of the tunes on this record have improvisations that are very closely linked to the tunes themselves and that it could not be otherwise. That’s what I’m trying to do anyway.

The collaborators:

Lloyd Swanton, producer. After about 20 recordings of my own over the years, this is the first time I’ve worked with a producer. Lloyd is one of the first musicians I met when I first came to Australia in the late 90s—I had sought him out after hearing The Necks’ recording **Next** in New York—and it was through him that I met many of the musicians I’ve subsequently played with since I have moved here: **Sandy Evans**, **Alister Spence**, **Toby Hall**, **James Greening** and others. His attention to detail and deeply thoughtful input permeates every moment of this recording, and it is so much the better for it. He has served throughout as a counterbalance to my own normal working procedure which combines carelessness with hastily-made inadvisable decisions.

Lloyd Swanton, bass. Lloyd’s practice as an instrumentalist combines humor, soulfulness and supportiveness. He is an ideal collaborator, and a terrific band leader in his own right with his band **The Catholics**, and with his collaborative trio **The Necks**. He is a person who I regularly turn to when in the throes of indecisiveness (often) regarding issues both musical and professional.

Alister Spence, organ. Alister is the pianist who has played on the most of my projects since I’ve been in Australia, including bands, silent film scores, and music for theatre. (I’ve also had the incredible good fortune to work with **Matt McMahon**, **Chris Abrahams**, **Gary Daley**, **Casey Golden**, **Jex Saarelaht** and **Peter Dasent** since I’ve been in this country). He is a consummate musician, combining chops, imagination and knowledge of the history of this music. His warmth and generosity is easily felt in his playing.

Nic Cecire, drums. Nic’s musicianship and skill have been heard with countless musicians in Australia. He fits in so perfectly with what I am trying to do in music because of his historical and stylistic versatility, and because of his imagination and humor. He has made every one of these tunes better than I had imagined them with his subtle and melodic drumming.