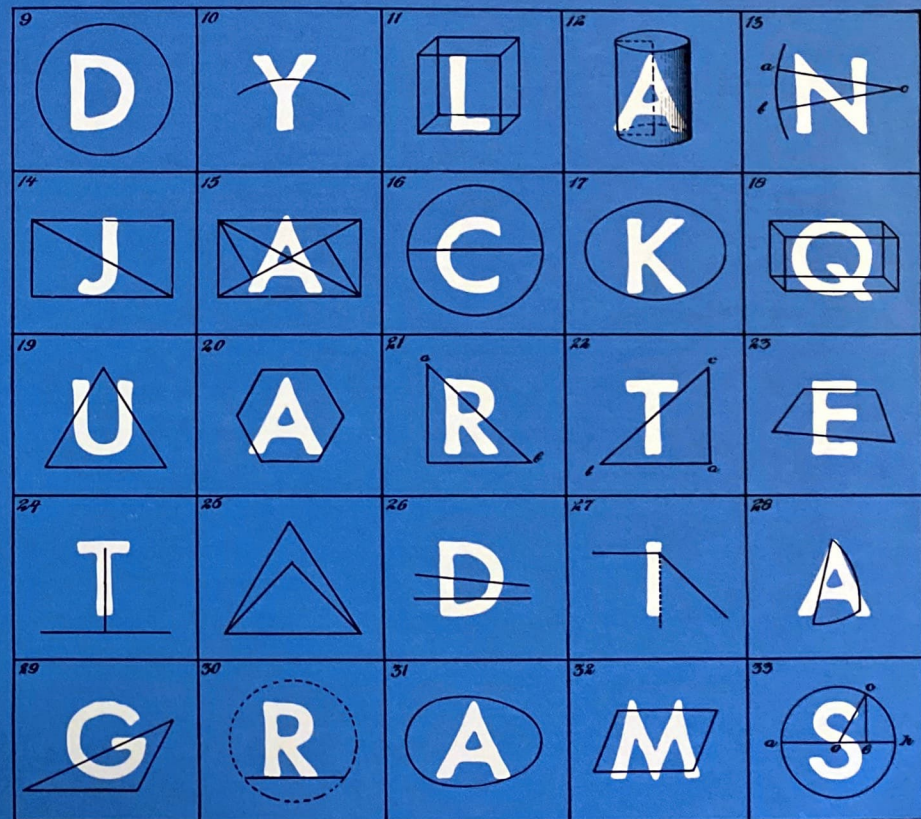


DYLAN JACK QUARTET DIAGRAMS



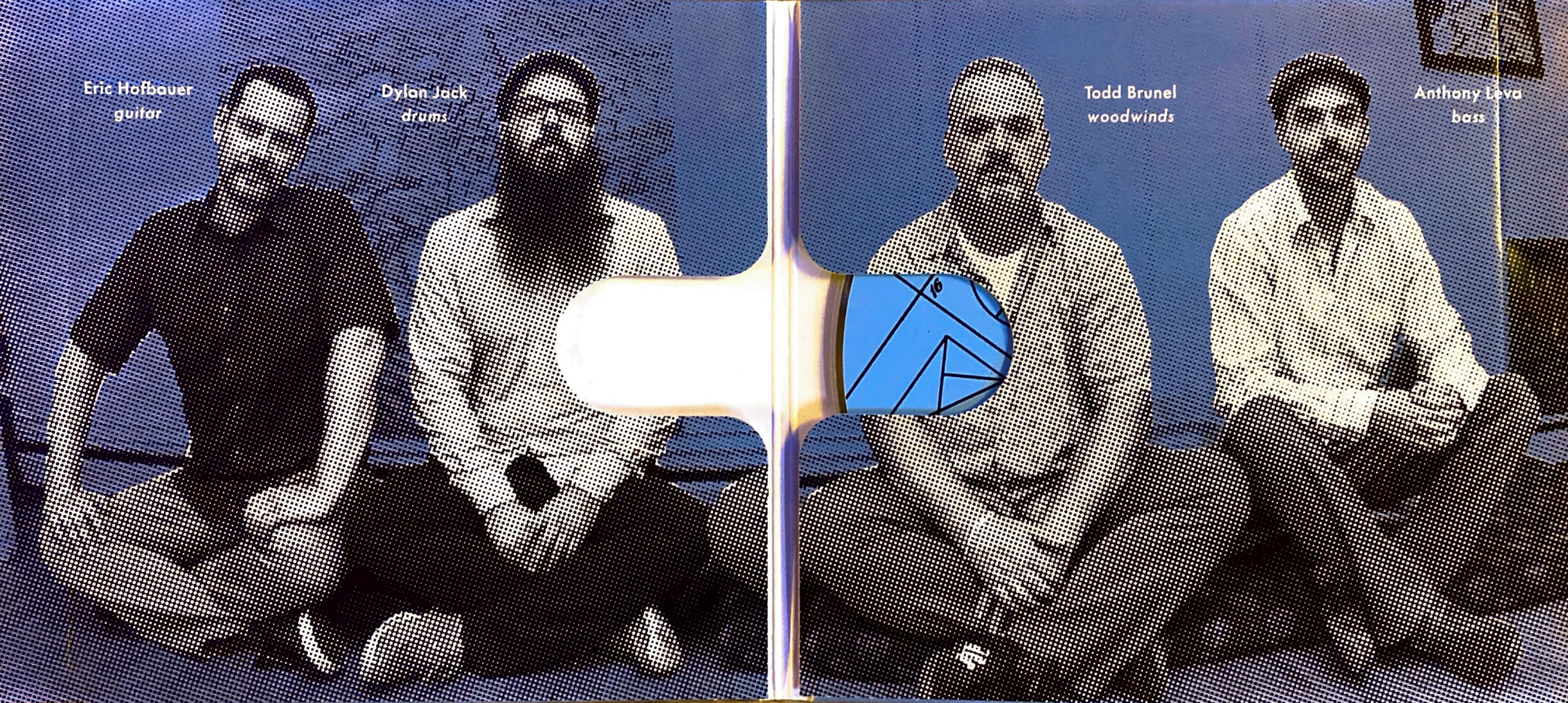


Eric Hofbauer  
guitar

Dylan Jack  
drums

Todd Brunel  
woodwinds

Anthony Leva  
bass





## DYLAN JACK QUARTET

Todd Brunel — Bb clarinet,  
bass clarinet, and soprano saxophone

Eric Hofbauer — guitar

Anthony Leva — bass

Dylan Jack — drums

Produced by Dylan Jack and Eric Hofbauer. Recorded (February 25, 2017),  
Mixed and Mastered at The Rotary Records by Warren Amerman.  
Artwork and Design by Benjamin Shaykin. Photography by John Peresada  
for Phillip-Lauren Photography. All music composed by Dylan Jack  
(Helmet Cat Music). [www.DylanJackMusic.com](http://www.DylanJackMusic.com)

Are You Made of Coins? 7:55

Sentenced 11:32

Ghost Pal 13:58

Geometry 7:21

Compare and Contrast 7:45

## DYLAN JACK QUARTET DIAGRAMS

There's a raw and honest spirit and a highly refined sense of detail in the music of Dylan Jack, a gifted drummer and composer hailing from the North Shore of Massachusetts. There's also a roiling spontaneity and brilliant clarity in the sound of his quartet, made up of Jack, Eric Hofbauer on guitar, Todd Brunel on woodwinds and Anthony Leva on bass. *Diagrams* is their compelling debut release.

Jack offers a bit of the backstory: "The lineup came together when Anthony, who I'd been playing with for a couple of years prior, brought Todd, Eric, and me on board for a gig he had booked in late 2015. I'd never met Eric or Todd before that, but the connection was pretty special. We played some free tunes and 'Geometry' from this record. It left such an impression that I contacted everyone to play on my graduate MM recital at Longy School of Music [Bard College] the following May. That evening we played 'Geometry' as well as 'Are You Made of Coins?' and 'Sentenced.' Everyone wanted to play more, so we booked gigs and this recording session." Soon after, Hofbauer suggested a release on his own Creative Nation label.

As an undergrad, Jack studied at McNally Smith College of Music in St. Paul, MN under drummer/composer Marv Dahlgren, whom he credits as "the most important musical figure in my life since our first lesson." Through Dahlgren, Jack explains, he gained "the inspiration to create compositions out of exercises or 'tools' — sticks, brushes, mallets, extended techniques, etc. Thanks to him my

practice sessions can turn into compositions." This is why we hear such refreshing unpredictability in Jack's approach to form, harmony and rhythmic structure, a distillation of everything he's learned not only from Dahlgren but other role models such as Frank Zappa, Duke Ellington, Iannis Xenakis and Edgard Varèse.

Interestingly, as a drummer Jack cites trumpeters as a major influence: "Don Cherry, Dizzy Gillespie, and Louis Armstrong are some of the players that I look to for melodic and rhythmic inspiration." The drummers he admires form quite a list: Dahlgren, Ed Blackwell, Roy Haynes, "Papa" Jo Jones, Sunny Murray, Terry Bozzio, Billy Cobham and Tony Williams. "These drummers vary stylistically but all strive for complete control of all four limbs and a sophisticated sense of melody and time/polyrhythms. That level of control is what I strive for every day behind the kit."

One can hear that sort of discipline and aesthetic sensitivity from every member of quartet, beginning with Leva. "I met Tony when I joined a band called Jaggery in February 2014. We played avant-garde rock with a heavy jazz influence. Tony and I were the only ones allowed to improvise, so for two years we developed a strong level of trust that transferred over to this quartet. Tony's style grounds all of us as one unit instead of having four different musicians run wild. He's not necessarily a 'jazz' player by definition, but that's why I wouldn't want any other bass player on this record. There's a child-like innocence to his playing. His solos remind me of nursery rhymes."

Hofbauer lends the music not just an adventurous harmonic sense but also a gutsy wood-and-steel timbre, far from what Jack calls the "sweet, clean tone"

avored by many modern jazz plectrists. "There are some really scary moments where he and I are so together that I wonder how it's even possible," says Jack. "His rhythmic sense is unmatched and his sense of harmony is just as great. As someone who likes to use chords as melody-enhancers, I'm amazed at how Eric enhances the melody-enhancers. It's absolutely amazing."

Of Brunel, Jack enthuses: "Todd's contribution as an improviser is electric. He wrote the countermelody on 'Sentenced' (0:32-0:42) in a rehearsal leading up to the date. He adds a great deal of intensity and leadership and attention to dynamics, always pushing ahead and directing the band to follow him on his journey." The combination of woodwinds and guitar, moreover, brings a textural uniqueness to the music, and Brunel's fluency on clarinet, bass clarinet and soprano saxophone keeps the band in a state of continual flux.

Jack's written material is difficult, but the difficulty is no obstacle to open exploration and rich interactivity. In fact it's a gateway. There's plenty of harmonic information and movement, but Jack's harmonies don't move in the way you'd expect, and for good measure Hofbauer doesn't voice them that way either. "When I resolve chords, I'm not looking to resolve them based on the rules of Western harmony," Jack comments. "I'm more interested on whether it is pleasing to my ears and if it works with my melody."

About the individual pieces, Jack's remarks say much about his artistic process and guiding philosophy:

ARE YOU MADE OF COINS? "I wanted something with a straight-eighth feel to really lock in with Tony, and a solid quarter-note pulse with a melody that's

opposite and very syncopated. This to me is a great example of the harmony complementing the melody. The solo sections are similar in progression but I eliminated the odd-meter tails from the melody for the solos. I wanted the solos to sound as natural as possible. When I was writing this piece, I was traveling to Cambridge, MA multiple times a week. Parking there you always need quarters for meters, so I had quarters in my pocket always. One day at my brother's house, they kept falling out and he got so annoyed that he yelled, 'What are you, made of coins?'"

SENTENCED "This piece relies a lot on development. It's melody in and then full-on improvisation with interludes between solo and interlude out. The intention of this piece is to play the melody and never go back, leaving the soloist to reference it so that it never really goes away. Totally free of harmony and strict meter, we're forced to make it interesting or else. I wrote the tune specifically for this group. The title came about as I was watching the news about the Boston Marathon bomber, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, being sentenced to life in prison. I wasn't directly affected by the bombing, but it hit everyone hard."

GHOST PAL "Going back to my inspiration for composing, Marv Dahlgren was clear in my mind. I wanted to write a tune to work on my brush technique. Little did I know that a one-page tune for that purpose would become a 14-minute experimental extravaganza. It's not as syncopated as 'Coins?' but it relies on polymetric textures in the melody. I often forget that I'm in 4/4 when I'm playing or listening to it. From start to finish it has a haunting quality and each instrument seems to play the role of some part of a haunted house (creaky floors/



walls, scurrying creatures, blowing wind, etc.). Harmonically, I'm more interested in sound and effects than I am resolution. The vamps (Dm7b5 to Em7b5) have that creepy whole-step rise and descent. Oddly enough, the tune got its name from something not scary at all: it's a reference to one of my favorite episodes of *South Park*."

**GEOMETRY** "This tune is named for the shape made by connecting lines from Lydian scales on the circle of fifths. It makes use of G Lydian and Eb Lydian in the A section and Db Lydian and B Lydian in the B Section. Also, rhythmically we create many different 'shapes' with polyrhythms and poly-pulses throughout."

**COMPARE AND CONTRAST** "The head in consists of phrases in 5/8 with interludes of two over five, three over five and four over five. The melody ideas are 12-tone, but on the head out it's tonal with the same rhythmic ideas but with no polyrhythmic breaks. The solo section stays in four over five. The interesting and most challenging part is that regardless of where we are, we are still in 5/8. There really is no room for error. It's very difficult to keep a band in 5/8 while switching pulses and soling, but Todd, Eric, and Tony are absolutely outstanding. We rehearsed each section by itself and combined everything once we were comfortable. With a tune like this, you need to reach another level of trust with your musicians. I feel we achieved that."

David R. Adler

New York, May 2017