

JOE MOFFETT - TRUMPET

NOAH KAPLAN - TENOR SAX GIACOMO MEREGA - ELECTRIC BASS

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ALL PIECES WERE FREELY IMPROVISED BY AD FAUNUM ON THE DATE OF RECORDING.

JACOB WILLIAM - DOUBLE-BASS

LUTHER GRAY - DRUMS

Joe Moffett's
AD FAUNUM • AD FAUNUM

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It's not a terribly common rationale for a session of freely improvised music. "The idea was to offer an almost ritualistic praise of animals," says trumpeter Joe Moffett. And so these five players, under Moffett's de facto leadership, chose the group name Ad Faunum. "To the animal" is one possible rendering from the Latin, although Ad Faunum ("To Faunus") is actually the title of Ode XVIII by the Roman lyric poet Horace (65 BC-8 BC). Faunus is half man and half goat, the Roman counterpart to the Greek god Pan. "I was thinking of a primeval idea," says Moffett, "an idea of 'worship' music, something very old, even prehistoric. It relates to the kind of primal energy I imagined creating with this group. Also, I was reflecting on people's almost religious regard for animals, on humanity's complex relationship to these other creatures that live in the world."

Moffett describes this band as "a gathering of multiple cross-sections," and at its core is the effortlessly unified sound of Moffett and tenor saxophonist Noah Kaplan, a fellow New England Conservatory graduate. "I wanted to form a band that was built around Noah's sound," Moffett remarks. "In a way, when I'm playing in this group, I'm adjusting to his language." Gruff and reedy timbres, keening legato phrases, restless interplay informed by a rigorous post-tonality: Kaplan and Moffett announce their musical kinship from the start of "Herdsman," and they sustain that mood and method throughout the five wholly improvised tracks to follow.

A Massachusetts native, Moffett completed his NEC studies in 2006 (as did Kaplan). He relocated to Brooklyn in fall 2009, although his choice of personnel for Ad Faunum reflects his ongoing connection to the Boston improvised music scene. New Orleans-born drummer Luther Gray, a Boston stalwart since 2000, has worked alongside Moffett with noted guitarist/bassist/bandleader Joe Morris. Bassist Jacob William, heard on upright in the left channel, has collaborated with Gray as well as altoists Jim Hobbs and Jorrit Dijkstra, among many others.

And who is that we hear in the right channel? An electric bassist? Yes, from New York by way of Italy, it is Giacomo Meregá, whose compelling 2008 debut "The Light And Other Things" featured Noah Kaplan as well as slide guitar maestro David Tronzo. Meregá proves to be the sonic wild card of the session, creating ghostly ambient textures on "The Other Species" and coming out of nowhere on "Riding the Pegasus Down" with fuzz bass of a distinctly psychedelic stamp.

There's an impeccably free-jazzy sound that emerges from Gray and William as a standalone rhythm section, and in that sense Meregá acts as a foil, pushing the music beyond genre limits. But he's not the only band member with surprises up his sleeve. We also hear, on "Pegasus," the sound of someone singing, as if far off in the distance.

It is Jacob William in a moment of inspiration, making his presence felt though he plays no bass on the track.

Multiple cross-sections indeed: the bassists give Ad Faunum an animated, wonderfully murky lower register, a stark example being "Matador." The contrapuntal options are endless as the band's sonic profile seems to shift subtly from piece to piece. But even in an environment this abstract and in the moment, full of indeterminate and fluctuating meanings, Moffett's trumpet feels like a centering force, particularly in the restraint of a piece like "Dove Tail."

Sounds from within and outside the free jazz/improv idiom have exerted an influence here. One source is the microtonal music of Joe Maneri, which has a systematic, theoretical side, but also what the trumpeter calls "a very spontaneous element, where all the scalar study and counterpoint work just kind of seep into the playing itself, unconsciously." Moffett also cites Miles Davis, Don Cherry and Wadada Leo Smith along with contemporaries such as Nate Wooley. "A lot of saxophonists factor into my playing, too," he adds, "including Braxton, Maneri, Ornette and Jim Hobbs." The angular, frenetic swing of Joe Morris creeps into the mix as well.

Elaborating on the "primeval" theme mentioned above, Moffett also speaks of "church music and early polyphony" as indirect models for improvisation. The use of microtones, he adds, can hark back to an era before equal temperament. Indeed, listen to these furtive, surpassingly dissonant songs and you just might hear hints of an edenic past, a bucolic idyll like the one described in Horace's ancient text:

*See my Flocks in sportive Vein
Frisk it o'er the verdant Plain,
When through Winter's Gloom thy Day
Festal shines, the Peasants play
On the grassy-matted Soil,
Round their Oxen, free from Toil.
See the Wolf forgets his Prey,
With my daring Lambs to play;
See the Forest's bending Head
At thy Feet its Honours shed,
While with joyful Foot the Swain [horse]
Beats the Glebe [field] he plow'd with Pain.*

— DAVID R. ADLER, New York, June 2011

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1. Herdsman
2. The Other Species
3. Matador
4. Riding the Pegasus Down
5. Dove Tail
6. Where Buzzards Fly

Recorded at **Firehouse 12**
on November 7, 2010 by
GREG DICROSTA.

Mixed at **Firehouse 12**
on December 21, 2010 by
NICK LLOYD.

Mastered by
RAFAL DREWNIANY
(dts studio)
on July 16, 2011.

Photo & design by **MAREK WAJDA**

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I would like to personally thank **NOAH, GIACOMO, JACOB**, and **LUTHER** for their extraordinary musicianship and dedication to this project.

— **JOE MOFFETT**, July 7, 2011

LUTHER GRAY - DRUMS