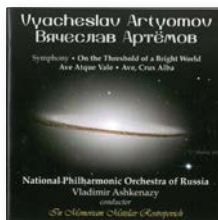


**National Philharmonic Orchestra of Russia;
Vladimir Ashkenazy
Divine Art dda 25143
(divineartrecords.com)**

► Vyacheslav Artyomov was preparing for a life in astrophysics, but these two symphonies (parts of a tetralogy) are unlike *The Planets*, unless you think of them as uber-Holst: they cause a visceral reaction and suggest a metaphysical *cri de cœur*. My initial reaction to them was that they sounded like the soundtrack of some 1940s film noir or an original-series *Star Trek* episode – which is apt, since they embody mystery and the unknown. In his essay, *Musica Perennis*, the composer said “Serious music is created by the spirit for the Spirit,” and these twin-released CDs reflect his view of music as a mediator between God and man, but also as science. While I find the *Threshold of a Bright World* symphony more arresting than the *Gentle Emanation*, they are both accessible, and while Artyomov is often compared to Arvo Pärt, I hear a little more of Rautavaara.



The orchestration in *Ave Atque Vale* and *Gentle Emanation* is a little jarring due to the highlighting of the percussion parts. But *Ave, Crux Alba*, a choral (Helikon Theatre Choir) and orchestral setting of the *Hymn of the Knights of Malta*, returns to the majesty and mystery Artyomov is known for in his musical quest for spirituality. *Tristia II*, based on the 19th-century poems of Nikolai Gogol and with spoken parts read by Russian actor Mikhail Philippov, carries on the potential-soundtrack feel and allows us non-Russian speakers to hear the cries of the artist to God for inspiration; the suspense in the middle tracks suggests Him mulling the petitions over.



Both CDs are in memoriam of the composer's friend and colleague, Mstislav Rostropovich, and both have expansive liner notes.

Vanessa Wells

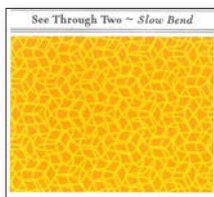
**Slow Bend
See Through Two
All-Set! A8007 (all-set.org)**

**Famous Wildlife Movies
Mike Smith
All-Set! A8006 (all-set.org)**

**Another Helpful Medicine
Aurochs
All-Set! A8004 (all-set.org)**

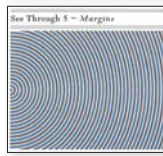
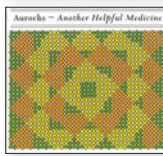
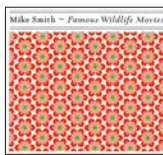
**Margins
See Through 5
All-Set! A8005 (all-set.org)**

► The All-Set! Imprint is fast becoming a beacon of originality as a fast-growing world of boutique and independent contemporary music labels. Its penchant for featuring artful cover graphics that appear more inclined towards corporate identity than visually describing musical content is unusual, to say the least. But nothing could prepare the listener for what to hear on each of their releases; not even the names of rather well-known experimental musicians whose work lies within each release. A case in point is *Slow Bend* by the bass duo See Through Two.



On this masterful performance by Rob Clutton (bass, banjo and fretless Fender bass) and Pete Johnston (bass) we glimpse music from quite another realm of bass violin, with the sound of the banjo providing not just relief, but occasionally elevating the music to the upper layers of this tonal realm. The personality of each piece is characterized by the rhythmic brevity of its title but often takes the dallying conversation between the two bassists to fascinating harmonic spaces. This adventure that takes as its starting point, in place of metric lassitude, a steady beat which is then stretched and moulded with infinite varieties of rubato. As a result, the rather explicitly titled *Range* that begins the set to *Trail*, which suggests not the end, perhaps, but the beginning of another journey, the refreshing overall impression is of a great colouristic soundscape that is rather dynamic and rich in possibility.

In addition to *Slow Bend*, but completely different in every aspect of music, recent releases have also included Mike Smith's *Famous Wildlife Movies*, a fascinating collection of pieces which emerges as an epic in miniature for large ensemble performed with special authority and élan. Two years after Aurochs' *Rational Animals* comes *Another Helpful Medicine*, which seems to have been created in a crucible ignited by an explosion of collective imagination. Finally the recent collection of releases includes *Margins* by See Through 5, a quintet whose music is characterized by its gaunt sonority, laser-like projection, finely calibrated articulation and uncanny rhythmic equilibrium.



Raul da Gama

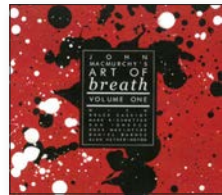
Concert note: All Set! founder Mike Smith's the Mike Smith Company is featured in

“Moondog 100” along with Nexus Percussion and guest vocalist Suba Sankarin on December 3 at the Music Gallery.

JAZZ AND IMPROVISED

**John MacMurchy's Art of Breath Volume One
John MacMurchy
Independent (johnmacmurchy.com)**

► Toronto woodwind stalwart John MacMurchy has produced a sonically refreshing album that manages to combine sophistication and accessibility across a variety of musical genres. The eight original compositions contained in *Art of Breath* flow together in a natural way, a testament to MacMurchy's writing and arranging skills. The somewhat unusual instrumentation, a septet augmented by vocals and a string quartet, makes for a broad colour palette. The front line of MacMurchy's tenor saxophone, clarinet and harmonica, Bruce Cassidy's trumpet, flugelhorn and EVI (electronic valve instrument) and Dan Ionescu's guitar provide a large ensemble sound with a few twists. Alan Hetherington's highly informed percussion work adds a nice touch of groove and authenticity to the tracks.



Expat Cafe introduces most of the band with Ionescu's slightly overdriven guitar tone and soaring approach giving way to pianist Mark Kieswetter's patiently constructed and harmonically lush solo. MacMurchy and Cassidy build intensity with spirited trading on tenor and EVI. *Working Title Blues* evokes Art Blakey in its soul jazz vibe and bop-oriented improvisation. Drummer Daniel Barnes and bassist Ross McIntyre swing hard and make concise solo contributions.

Vocalist Whitney Ross-Barris is also the lyricist of *Now You've Gone Away*. Her understated style and economy of phrasing lend themselves perfectly to the Latin-tinged ballad, as does the atmospheric string quartet arrangement and MacMurchy's soulful harmonica. Yvette Tollar brings her rich voice and poignant delivery to *Dandelion Wine*, MacMurchy's hauntingly beautiful elegy to a departed friend.

Ted Quinlan

**It's Easy to Remember
Cory Weeds Quintet featuring David
Hazeltine
Cellar Live CL031716 (cellarlive.com)**

► Vancouver tenor saxophonist Cory Weeds teams up with New York pianist David Hazeltine in this impressive live outing. Recorded at

