

AlasNoAxis

AlasNoAxis is the culmination of Jim Black's years of experience on stage and in the studio with some of the world's greatest composers and improvisors, years of experimentation with new sounds and techniques, and years of building powerful creative relationships with a circle of like-minded musicians. Its 2000 debut cd on Winter & Winter established a new standard for the cross-fertilization of rock, electro-acoustic improv and jazz. Continuing its evolution through four more cd's for W&W and concerts throughout North America and Europe, Alas has become a standard-bearer of "future jazz," thrilling listeners and inspiring a new generation of musicians with its powerhouse combination of jazz virtuosity, rock emotion and noisy catharsis.

The graceful skronk of Alas No Axis is a unique sound. Though it is informed by the outer reaches of contemporary rock music and the cutting edge of electronic technology, Alas No Axis's dynamic interplay and rhythmic drive bear the unmistakable mark of jazz virtuosity. Yet this is not exactly fusion. Jim Black's compositions resemble rigorously constructed rock songs much more than they do the sprawling openness one usually associates with fusion. And though improvisation proliferates, it never devolves into instrumental showpieces. Unlike other bands which have attempted jazz-rock, Alas No Axis is neither rock instrumentation and style applied to jazz structure, nor the opposite, but rather a fully realized synthesis of sound, structure, and technique. In Alas No Axis, Jim Black has reinvented jazz-rock from the ground up.

The members of AlasNoAxis all have extensive experience in the borderlands between musical genres. They are among the most influential instrumentalists working today, having inspired legions of young musicians all over the world. Guitarist Hilmar Jensson and bassist Skúli Sverrisson are both key members of Iceland's burgeoning musical avant-garde. Jensson leads the collective Kitchen Motors and the trio Tyft and has recorded numerous solo cd's for the Bad Taste label. Sverrisson is one of the world's greatest virtuosos of the electric bass, and has worked extensively with artists ranging from fusion pioneer Allan Holdsworth to performance artist Laurie Anderson. Sverrisson is also widely regarded for his work in electro-acoustic music with Australian clarinetist Anthony Burr and his solo works on the Extreme label. Chris Speed is one of the leading saxophonists and clarinetists of his generation, and has worked with a who's who of today's foremost bandleaders, including Tim Berne, Uri Caine, Dave Douglas, and John Zorn.

At the core of Alas No Axis's revolutionary sound is the powerhouse percussion and sonic innovation of Jim Black. Having already expanded the language of jazz drumming, he is now radically reshaping the sound of jazz itself, reflecting today's advances in technology and advances in the sound and form of rock music. Much as artists like Radiohead and Björk have reworked popular music from within, Jim Black is reshaping jazz. Alas No Axis has set a new standard for creative music in the twenty first century, unafraid to explore the outer reaches of sound and virtuosity or the structured expression of songcraft.