



Phish Live, Tribute CDs Due

Dave Matthews, Jimmy Buffett will appear on album to benefit children's music charities

Fortunately for Phish fans, the band's hiatus didn't result in a period of seclusion. Singer/guitarist Trey Anastasio continues to tour with different backing ensemble, while drummer Jon Fishman has been on the road this month with a new unit called Pork Tornado, with whom he has also been recording a debut album. The group's live legacy will also be further preserved beyond tapes with the beginning of a new live album series titled Live Phish.

Taking a page from Pearl Jam's manual on flooding a hungry market, Phish will launch the series this summer with the release of six live albums on Elektra Records. The releases in the series will feature unedited concerts in their entirety, and the band also hopes to work some sound check material into the series at some point. No specifics have been revealed about which shows will make up the first six releases, but the band will reveal more details in the next few weeks.

In other Phish news, the Mockingbird Foundation -- a not-for-profit group of Phish fans who raised more than \$10,000 for music charities last year with the publication of its book, *The Phish Companion* -- is now planning a Phish tribute album. The two-disc *Sharin' in the Groove: Celebrating the Music of Phish* will feature Dave Matthews (solo), Jimmy Buffett, Arlo Guthrie, Hot Tuna, Little Feat, Preston School of Industry (featuring Pavement's Scott Kannberg), the Tom Tom Club and Merl Saunders, among others. Los Lobos' David Hidalgo and Louis Perez also appear with their children under the moniker Los Villians.

"The album aims to include the all-stars of Phish history and will include acts who have performed with the band onstage and those who have been influenced by their music," said producer Ellis Godard.

The album will be released in early-June and will benefit various children's music charities. For more information on the Mockingbird Foundation, visit www.mockingbirdfoundation.org.

- Andrew Dansby; May 1, 2001



Phish To Release Six Live Discs, Tribute Album On The Way

Phish's hiatus isn't expected to end anytime soon, though fans will soon have six live sets and a tribute album to give them their fix of the jam band's music. The band is hand-picking a half-dozen concerts from its 17-year career for release, with the final selections to be made this month, according to band spokesperson Jason Colton. No release date has been set.

The tribute album, produced by the fan-run Mockingbird Foundation, is structured like a Phish concert, with two sets and an encore. Featured performances include Dave Matthews' version of "Waste," the Wailers' cover of "Makisupa Policeman" and Jimmy Buffett's take on "Gumbo." Called *Sharin' in the Groove: Celebrating the Music of Phish*, the two-disc set should be out in late May or early June and will sell for less than \$20, according to a publicist for the project. All proceeds will go to the foundation and other charities.

Last fall, the Mockingbird Foundation, a non-profit organization that raises money for music education, put out the 928-page *The Phish Companion*, which catalogued all the band's live shows.

— Eric Schumacher-Rasmussen; May 2, 2001

Phish Fans Raise Thousands For Music Education Programs

An organization of Phish fans has announced that its book project cataloging the band's live shows has raised more than \$10,000 for music education charities.

The Mockingbird Foundation will divvy up the funds to the Athabaskan Music Program of the Yukon-Koyukuk School District in Alaska; the New Mexico Jazz Workshop in Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Art Sanctuary and the LIFE After School Program in Philadelphia, the organization said in a press release.

The 928-page *Phish Companion*, written by members of the foundation, was released in the fall by Backbeat Books.

The Mockingbird Foundation is a nonprofit corporation formed by Phish fans in 1997 to produce "the definitive book on Phish" and a Phish tribute album, with all proceeds from the projects supporting music education. Additional grants are planned for the summer.

— Teri VanHorn; March 21, 2001



CD of the Week

A collection of Phish songs, covered by a widely diverse group of artists. Organized much like a Phish show - the two discs represent the first set and second set respectively - it contains many of the same highs and lows that a Phish concert can bring.

The highs include Jimmy Buffett's take on "Gumbo," Project Logic with guitarist John Scofield reinventing "Cars Trucks Buses," and stadium rocker Dave Matthews revealing the sweetness and the irony that exist simultaneously in the ballad "Waste." Phish has long been criticized by many for not having the deepest of lyrics, but such a critique ignores the depth of complexity in many of the band's musical compositions, which are revealed here by Trey Anastasio's arrangement of "My Friend My Friend / Guyute" in a classical style for the Vermont Youth Orchestra, and Phish lyricist Tom Marshall's band Amfibian delivering a very Phishy version of "The Wedge."

The collection also has a downside, however. While Phish's lyrics are often meant to be playful rather than deep (if the Dead came of age giving sonic expression to the fact that films were the basic mode of visual expression in their formative years, Phish came of age in a world where cartoons were more important), there are times when the lyrics can be just downright obnoxious, as is the case when Son Seals & Rebecca's Statue sing "Suzy Greenberg" (despite its Zappaesque intent). Those caveats aside, there are some truly adventurous takes on Phish music, such as Lake Trout's "Faht > Catapult > Tweezer Reprise," Michael Ray & The Cosmic Krewe giving a New Orleans Big Band reading to "Tweezer / Magilla," or The Preston School Of Industry's version of "Axilla (Part II)." Add to that the facts that this compilation is a benefit for music programs for youth, that the Mockingbird Foundation takes no money to pay its board members, and that they kept the price of this collection to a mere \$12, means that this collection is a great choice of gift to give to your Phishy friends this coming holiday season.

- November 7, 2001



Covering Phish

Goose bumps crawled up my spine in 1996 when an a capella group at the posh Taft School in Watertown, CT, honored alum Trey Anastasio with a rendition of "Bouncing Around the Room". I remember thinking how Phish covered dozens of songs, and how natural it seemed that other musicians would delve into Phish's eclectic body of work.

Fast forward to 2001. Arlo Guthrie leads off the double-CD Phish tribute *Sharin' in the Groove* with a brilliant "Bouncing" that sounds like a child's campfire song. *Sharin'* is a must-have. The 20 songs represent Phish's musical themes: have fun, play well and explore genres. Like Phish's covers, these artists maintain their identities while respecting the integrity of the original compositions.

Every track deserves to be mentioned, but the best are the Dave Matthews Band's relaxed "Waste", Jimmy Buffett's loose "Gumbo", Little Feat's "Sample in a Jar", Project Logic and John Scofield's techno trip through "Cars Trucks Buses", the Gordon Stone Trio's hip banjo on "Runaway Jim", the Wailers' reggae translation of "Makisupa Policeman" and Phish lyricist Tom Marshall and his band Amfibian's psychedelic treatment of "The Wedge".

The Mockingbird Foundation, known for *The Phish Companion*, produced and released *Sharin' in the Groove* as a fundraiser for music education. It's just \$12 at mockingbirdfoundation.org.

- Ken Krayeske; January, 2002 [other albums reviewed: Macy Gray's *The Id* and Bob Dylan's *Love and Theft*]



Since [Trey] Anastasio's day job with jamband elder Phish has been on indefinite status, no group has come around to challenge their vacated throne. The reason is that few bands now coming out take song writing seriously, and are content to merely vamp on grooves without a cohesive song structure.

Sharin' in the Groove is a tribute to the music of a jamband that wrote songs that while usually bizarre, were always memorable. While the album does have its fair share of weak moments, no other tribute I can recall boasts such a wide array of styles and personalities, ranging from punk to reggae to school marching bands.

... Local trumpet funkster Michael Ray & his Cosmic Krewe defy convention by refreshingly playing "Tweezer" and "Magilla" not as a medley, but simultaneously. A surprising highlight comes from a solo Dave Matthews whose delicate voice perfectly matches the mood and feel of "Waste".

The most interesting cut comes from the Vermont Youth Orchestra whose symphonic interpretation of "My Friend My Friend / Guyute" best represents the grand scope and playfulness of a Phish concert. Proceeds from *Sharin' in the Groove* will go to several music education charities throughout the country.

- Christopher Blagg; November 21, 2001



Review of *Sharin' in the Groove*

Listening to these songs, one gets the sense that, even at its most decrepit, Phish's music had an unconscious focus and force. Tracks like Lake Trout's organica-infused sequence of "Faht>Catapult>Tweezer Reprise", the Boredoms' ambient "Free (End of Session verion)", and Trey Anastasio's arrangement of "Guyute" for the Vermont Youth Orchestra make the discs more than worth the \$12 price of admission and demonstrate that the best way to interpret Phish material is to conceive of it as completely different music. Takes that ignore the outlying superficialities of Phish's style stay far truer to the Vermont quartet than those who simply try to respect them through mimicry.

- Jesse Jarnow; October/November 2001

Hartford Courant

Sharin' in the Groove: Celebrating the Music of Phish

The latest entry in the ever-growing world of tribute albums, *Sharin' the Groove*, a double-disc set (priced as a single disc) was assembled by the Mockingbird Foundation, a charitable organization maintained by Phish fans that will donate proceeds from the project to benefit music education for children.

Phish, currently on hiatus, is a band known more for its jam-heavy live shows and Deadhead-like following than for its songwriting saviness. Yet the material covered here, most of which was written by Phish frontman Trey Anastasio and lyricist Tom Marshall, holds up surprisingly well.

Artists like Jimmy Buffett and Dave Matthews, who performs the simple, melodic tune "Waste," will draw attention to this disc, but it's the lesser-known acts that provide the creative spark. Project Logic with John Scofield does as the title suggests and gets a great groove going as the band combines Logic's scratching with Scofield's jazzy guitar work on its cover of "Cars Trucks Buses."

While The Preston School of Industry rocks hard on "Axilla (Part II)" and The Gordon Stone Trio, whose drummer Russ Lawton is a member of Trey Anastasio's touring band, adds a nice touch of bluegrass to the previously unreleased "Runaway Jim." The big surprise here is The Vermont Youth Orchestra, which gives us classical Phish as it performs a graceful version of "My Friend My Friend/Guyute" that was arranged by Anastasio.

Sharin' In The Groove is a project by Phish fans for Phish fans, and it won't hold much appeal to listeners who weren't enthralled with songs like "Tweezer" beforehand. Rabid fans of the Vermont quartet should find this a nice holdover as they anxiously await the onslaught of live Phish recordings that will arrive in stores Tuesday. (Anastasio's side project Oysterhead, meanwhile, plays a sold-out show at Toad's Place in New Haven Friday).

- Sheryl Hunter; November 16, 2001

Mockingbird Foundation ready to fly onto bookshelves, stereos

Ellis Godard is no ordinary music fan. Most people have no problem attending a concert by their favorite band whenever the group rolls through town, or buying that group's new album when it hits the sales racks. Godard, however, has stretched his appreciation for the band Phish — a Vermont-based rock 'n' roll band deeply versed in improvisation — from the bottom to the top.

Godard, a 29-year-old University of Virginia Ph.D. candidate who currently is writing his dissertation on how conflicts are managed online, is one of the founders and director of the Mockingbird Foundation — named after a rarely-performed Phish song, "Famous Mockingbird."

The nonprofit organization is dedicated to producing the most comprehensive guide to Phish's music and history the group's fans have ever seen. What began as an idea that sounded like fun has grown into a near full-time, three-year affair as Godard and about 40 volunteers focus on organizing contributions from about 1,500 devoted fans comprising 2,100 pages of information.

"There have been online resources about the band and the music since 1991 or so," says Godard. "There have been other books published about Phish, and some of them borrowed information from those resources. Now, the book will get back into the hands of the fans in the form of a factually accurate and entertaining literary book."

Phish fans are known for chasing the band from town to town, catching as many shows as they can on a tour, and tracking the band's performance song by song. *The Phish Companion: A Guide to the Band and their Music* comes complete with set lists of every show Phish has performed — including many not referenced by other resources — detailed information about the band's songs and the group's history.

Godard says he has not personally corresponded with the members of Phish, but he does receive assistance and blessings from Dionysian Productions — the band's management — and archivist Kevin Shapiro, who helped confirm the thousands of set lists included in the book.

So far, the Mockingbird Foundation has received no funding. Godard and his assistants pay for all expenses associated with publishing the book — postage, telephone bills and whatever else pops up — out of their own pockets. They say they're dedicated to completing the project on their own and of their own volition. In fact, the foundation won't receive any money generated by sales of the book, which already has thousands of pre-orders.

All of the proceeds from the book, which retails for about \$20, will benefit music education for children. The Mockingbird Foundation is beginning to solicit funds, but the plan is to do something other than buy instruments, uniforms, or similar items. "We want to do something

funky," says Godard. "Maybe provide kids with some quirky instrument or pair them with an unusual composer."

Godard and his board of directors, which is comprised of other "Phishheads" who are famous within fan circles in their own right, have also begun putting together a Phish tribute album. This is not the standard tribute CD: the album, which is tentatively titled "The Mockingbird Tribute," will contain live and studio recordings from musicians who have influenced Phish — people including Chicago bluesman Son Seals, Willie Nelson, Arlo Guthrie and Duke Ellington, among others.

Godard wouldn't reveal who will be performing which songs, but he did agree to drop one hint about the album's music. "Son Seals will be performing 'Suzie Greenberg,'" he says. He also says a three-song CD will be packaged as a companion with the book and will contain the original recordings of two songs, and one composition by the band that Phishheads have never heard.

The Mockingbird Foundation will continue to exist following the release of the book and tribute album. Godard says the foundation will still be run on a volunteer basis and that there are no plans to hire any full time employees.

- Daniel Pearson; February, 2001



Gone Phishin'

Ever since Phish, the enigmatic Grateful Dead-esque jam band, went on hiatus this fall after 17 years of touring, its phans have felt bereft. Some business executives are so hooked on the quirky group that they privately admit to having rescheduled meetings in order to catch performances. Until Phish gets back onstage, here's a temporary phix: *The Phish Companion* (Miller Freeman, \$23), an encyclopedic archive of every known set list, beginning with the first gig in 1983 (where a hockey stick doubled as the microphone stand) to last October's finale, featuring a Japanese version of "The Meatstick," a Macarena-esque song and dance. Want to know how many shows the band performed that fell on a Tuesday? (It was 109.) Its most-performed song? ("You Enjoy Myself," 454 times.) "Gamehendge" - a musical fable performed so seldom it has achieved Holy Grail status - is here revealed to be lead singer Trey Anastasio's thesis from his senior year in college. To order, call 800-848-5594.

- Joshua Levine; January 8, 2001

Every Concert Phish Have Played To Be Detailed In Book - Rock band's Internet fans compile setlists, poems, essays, photos.

The more than 1,000 shows Phish have played in their 16-year history will be cataloged in a book that its editor — who compiled it largely over the Internet — said will be the "definitive desk reference" to the improvisational rock band's concerts.

"There are books of their shows that have setlists and things, but they are largely incomplete," [coordinator] Ellis Godard said. "We know of 100 or so shows that haven't been mentioned before."

Godard, a 28-year-old graduate student, chairs the Mockingbird Foundation, a charitable organization formed by Phish fans on the Net in 1997. He said the core team of about 30 people working on the book has received hundreds of e-mail and traditional mail submissions from fans for the book...

The book is the foundation's first project. Proceeds from it will be donated to various charities that have yet to be determined, Godard said.

The submissions include long-lost setlists, essays and poems inspired by concerts, photos from shows, and observations on the band's development.

"[The band] was aware of the project from the beginning," Godard, who lives in Soquel, Calif., said. "They've been supportive, implicitly and explicitly. They shared info with us, and we've shared with them."

Godard said the manuscript stands at nearly 1,200 pages, which will translate to 400 to 500 pages in print. The foundation is shopping for a publisher now. Godard said the book could be out as early as next summer.

Phish — guitarist Trey Anastasio, keyboardist Page McConnell, bassist Mike Gordon and drummer Jon Fishman — formed in Burlington, Vt., in 1983. Their live jams and frequent curveballs — such as an a cappella rendition of "Freebird" — have attracted a cult following big enough to make them the 17th-most popular concert draw in North America in 1998, according to trade magazine Pollstar.

Godard estimated that Phish have performed around 1,150 shows through the years. The book organizes those shows into themed chapters. One chapter, for example, explores the evolution of the band's longer, jammier songs, such as "You Enjoy Myself" (RealAudio excerpt) and "Mike's Song."

In recent years, Phish have steered away from jams that focus on Anastasio's incendiary guitar work toward a stronger presence of Gordon's bass and McConnell's piano.

"They are able to communicate with each other musically in a much better way than they used to," Geneva Anastasio, Trey's stepmother, said backstage at a Phish show in Washington, D.C., last week.

The band has integrated more reggae, funk and blues covers into its setlists, including Stevie Wonder's "Boogie on Reggae Woman" and Son Seals' "Funky Bitch," in the process.

Phish will stage a two-day New Year's festival Dec. 30–31 on the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation in the Florida Everglades. They recently wrapped up a string of gigs in the Northeast U.S.

- December 24, 1999



Latest food for Phish fans comes in the form of a book

If you have any interest in the jam band Phish, *The Phish Companion* (Miller Freeman Press) belongs at the top of your Christmas wish list.

The book is the brainchild of the Mockingbird Foundation, a collective of Phish fans who wanted to raise money for charities using their love of all things Phish.

They sent out the word to Phish fans all around the country for information on set lists, trivia, concert reviews, and everything else they can think of.

The result is an amazing 915-page compendium that has the set lists and comments for every single show Phish fans played, plus club shows in the band's early days, side projects and guest appearances.

There are statistical charts here that would shame a fantasy baseball fan, including a breakdown of how many times Phish played a given song in a given year. The book also traces the inspiration, inception, and development of a lot of the band's most beloved songs.

It's a rich bounty of details. For example, Madison Phish fans may know that a naked man ran onstage during the band's 1998 show at the Kohl Center. But did you know that they referenced the streaker in the lyrics to "Carini" at several subsequent shows?

Or that Phish's first documented appearance in Madison was at the Barrymore Theatre in 1990 (although some sources argue it was at Great Hall)? Or that Phish played Milwaukee on the night of the O.J. Simpson Bronco chase, and weaved O.J. references into several songs? Or that... Oh, just feed your obsession and buy the book. Proceeds from sales of *The Phish Companion* will support music education for children.

- December 14, 2000