

## Liner Notes by Miles Okazaki:

On the March equinox of 2021, Trickster (Matt Mitchell, Anthony Tidd, and Sean Rickman and myself) assembled at Oktaven Studios north of NYC to tackle a new collection of compositions I'd written during the pandemic. Our previous albums were made up of what I would simply call "songs," but for this project I decided to expand the format. The intention was to make something like an exquisite corpse, the collective improvisations developed by the Surrealists. So for this album my job as composer was to bring in some ideas, set them in motion and then listen, trying to recognize the value of serendipitous events at transitional points in the music and lead the band down whatever path may be opening. The borderlands are where the Trickster hangs out, the undefined space where logic dissolves and creativity thrives. My hope was that the listener would enjoy the experience of passing through these boundaries between contrasting episodes.

After mixing and mastering, I was trying to come up with titles. I thought of strange journeys to distant lands, and of Sun Ra, one of the greatest Surrealists of them all. I called Matt Mitchell to bounce some ideas around, and he gave me a copy of *Monorails and Satellites*. While looking at the liner notes I saw the poem called "The Far Off Place," and got my answer. The song titles on this album are lines from that poem.

The artwork is by Linda Okazaki (my mother), a watercolor called *Dream at Salt Creek*. Her work is also aligned with the surrealist impulse to dream of ways to travel to different possible times and worlds through symbolism. The imagery is from the Pacific Northwest, notably the ravens, which find their way into many of my album covers.

As I make more recordings I'm getting better at letting the materials do their own thing. David Breskin (the producer of this album) likened this sensibility to the architect Louis Kahn, talking to the brick, asking it what it wants to be, and going in that direction. When I presented to David the early versions of the modular sections that make up this album, he came up with the architectural analogue of the "kit-of-parts," where fabricated components can be shuffled and assembled in a variety of ways. For this

album I had detailed blueprints, but at some point surrendered to the dream logic of the collective. Luckily I have here a group of musicians who are willing to explore any direction at the drop of a hat. I'm grateful for any opportunity I have to work with them.

The last member of the team is the brilliant scholar Robin D. G. Kelley. He came to see us play in Los Angeles a few years back and we stayed in touch, talking about Monk, Erroll Garner, and other tricksters. As he's also one of the great Surrealist thinkers of our time, I wanted to ask him if he'd be willing to say a few words about this album and am honored to have his elegant riffs introduce the music in the liner notes.

I'd like to thank the people who brought this project to life: Matt, Sean, and Anthony for releasing the sounds; Ron Saint Germain for capturing and shaping them; Scott Hull for icing the cake; David Breskin and Chelsea Hadley for vision, guidance, and support; Linda Okazaki for setting the music to images; and Robin D. G. Kelley for finding the words to invite the listener into this place.