



Bio information: **DYLAN RYAN / SAND**

Title: **SKY BLEACHED** (Cuneiform Rune 357) Format: CD / DIGITAL

Cuneiform promotion dept: (301) 589-8894 / fax (301) 589-1819

email: joyce [-at-] cuneiformrecords.com (Press & world radio); radio [-at-] cuneiformrecords.com (North American & world radio)

www.cuneiformrecords.com

**FILE UNDER: JAZZ**

*"I had the idea to write songs for a jazz band that had elements of Black Sabbath, the Cure, Jaco-era Joni Mitchell, and free jazz. I intentionally made the free playing and the composed sections less compartmentalized. The idea is to have a really great sounding rhythm section that can stretch out and make music spontaneously, and naturally together. Sand is a jazz band, but it reflects the different things I grew up on and listen to; It reflects the fact that I am playing jazz, but that I wasn't born in 1945." – Dylan Ryan.*

Featuring his volatile, **Los Angeles**-based trio **Sand**, *Sky Bleached* is **Dylan Ryan**'s debut album under his own name, but the insistently exploratory drummer isn't a new face on the professional music soundstage. A bandstand veteran who's spent the past decade collaborating with an array of galvanizing musicians across a wide array of creative scenes, he's probably best known as the catalyst behind the pugnacious prog-jazz sextet **Herculaneum**. That's likely to change with **Cuneiform**'s release of *Sky Bleached*, a stunning, guitar-drenched slab of visionary, 21<sup>st</sup> century jazz informed by pop culture and 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium fusion.

A key force in the avant-rock project **Icy Demons**, and half of the psychedelic electronica power duo **Michael Columbia**, the Chicago-raised Ryan has also toured with Omaha indie rock legends **Cursive** and regularly works with Los Angeles electro-world-pop outfit **Rainbow Arabia**. Boasting a sonic vision that stretches to the far horizon, *Sky Bleached* draws on many of Ryan's varied experiences, but Sand instantly establishes itself as wild and wooly creature in its own right.

Featuring Los Angeles guitarist **Tim Young**, a versatile player sought out by artists such as **Fiona Apple**, **John Zorn** and **Beck**, and bassist **Devin Hoff**, a recent LA arrival who's toured and recorded extensively with the **Nels Cline Singers**, **Xiu Xiu**, and **Good For Cows**, the LA-based trio restlessly ranges between moods, textures and styles. For Ryan, the project provided an ideal opportunity for exploring contrasting, even antithetical impulses, juxtaposing introspective odes with aggressive anthems, artfully composed passages and impromptu flights.

"I had the idea to write songs for a band that had elements of **Black Sabbath**, the **Cure**, **Jaco-era Joni Mitchell**, and free jazz," Ryan says. "I was really inspired by an interview I read with **Dylan Carlson** on the topic of collective improvisation on a recent **Earth** record. So the free playing and the composed sections are less compartmentalized. The idea is to have a really great sounding rhythm section that can stretch out without being explicitly tied to parts and make music spontaneously and naturally together."

Far more than a collection of exciting tunes, the album is programmed like a Quentin Tarantino film, marked by wide open spaces, sudden accelerations, and lovingly subverted genre conventions. Opening with the cinematic "White Nights," Ryan offers an open-road invitation by way of an infectious 5/4 bass and drums groove that sets up Young's gracefully swooping panoramic solo. The action heats up with "Barocco," an extended crescendo that builds from Young's lilting fingerstyle guitar work to a furious, churning climax. After the wave crashes, the trio recovers from the release of pent up tension as Hoff and Young's vamp on a subtly funky and angular dénouement for Ryan's beautifully understated solo.

"Psychic Journey" kicks off with a clattering cowbell pattern that sets up a lovely pop melody rendered by Hoff and Young in unison, and then shifts back to a denser sonic web built on a laid back 6/8 shuffle. Here, as with much of Sand's material, Ryan employs some of the strategies he developed on recent Herculaneum recordings, creating solo sections that are less about harmonic development than establishing a mood through finely calibrated bass and drums interplay. And then sometimes the band just wails. On **Paul Motian**'s "White Magic," Ryan offers an uproarious tribute to the late, beloved bandleader and drummer, effortlessly adopting a squally piece from the classic 1982 album *Psalm* (ECM) with a surf-rock vibe accentuated by the red hot Frusciantesque backwards effects employed by Young in his solo.

Ryan wrote the tunes with Young and Hoff in mind, knowing that they would thrive in the open spaces he provided. "I brought in loose sketches that I wrote on guitar," he explains. "My limitations on the guitar allowed (or rather forced) me to think in broader gestures than anything I write and arrange on piano for the five voices in Herculaneum, and I totally trusted that Tim and Devin would get inside them."

Part of what makes *Sky Bleached* such a rewarding debut is that Sand never settles into a singular course or strategy. The trio also embraces collective improvisation, pieces that can take a volatile turn, like the brief, crunching "Mayan Sun," or that can buzz with ominous portent, like "Soft Rain On a Dead Sea," which features some haunting Hoff bow work. The album closes with two extemporaneous tunes that find Sand wandering through a strange and spacious soundscape. With a sound as evocative as its title, "Dreamspell" floats with an unsettling logic, evolving from a coiled drone to a headlong pursuit. The chase seems to continue on the concluding title track, as Young brings his cagey stuttering lines to the predatory but atmospheric bass/drums conversation.

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Beyond the sheer pleasure provided by listening to three musicians challenge, probe, and support each other, the most striking aspect of the *Sky Bleached* improvisations is the trio's evident willingness to take their flights to the edge of disarray, and navigate to resolution within that uncharted terrain.

In some ways the group compositions are reminiscent of **Jimmy Giuffre's** late-1950s "abstracts" where, although the group is creating a spontaneous piece of music, the rhythmic and harmonic consonance invites listeners on the journey. Many a fan will instantly cotton to sounds like the "Are You Experienced?" backward cymbal or a fuzzed out **Black Sabbathian** guitar line, though the sounds are thoroughly repurposed by the trio.

Ryan was writing the music at the same time he was collaborating with the LA electronica duo Rainbow Arabia and touring with Cursive. "Aesthetically these three bands are in totally different buildings, but for whatever reason it really worked for me to be consistently writing, just shifting back and forth between palettes," he says. "Tim and Devin and I set out to make what we thought a really engaging record could sound like, with composition, groove, emotion, melody, and improvisation holding almost equal weight."

With their love of jazz, metal, indie pop and numerous other styles, Ryan, Hoff and Young draw on a vast shared sonic vocabulary in **Sand**. In creating a fertile environment for the trio, Ryan fully utilizes Hoff's gift for melodic invention, and Young's imperturbable rhythmic drive. Whether exploring a melancholy soundscape or an ecstatic rave up, *Sky Bleached* constantly subverts expectations with music that defies categories, and embraces all possibilities.

*For more information on Dylan Ryan / Sand, see:*  
[www.dylanryanmusic.com](http://www.dylanryanmusic.com)

### **DYLAN RYAN**

Born in Chicago, Illinois in 1979, Ryan spent several years studying guitar and piano before he found his way to the drums in junior high. Following lessons at nearby Northwestern University, he began studying with some of the region's top players, particularly **Gerry Coleman**, **Joel Spencer**, and **Paul Wertico**. He also began frequenting the Bloom School, seeking out as many disparate musical settings as possible, including the **Chicago Youth Symphony** and the **Midwest Young Artists Orchestra**. Attending Chicago's DePaul University he studied literature and film, and also found time to launch the instrumental jazz outfit that evolved into **Herculaneum**, his longest standing project. Around 2001, Ryan developed creative relationships with **Bablicon** members **David McDonnell** and **Griffin Rodriguez**, and began recording and touring with the progressive pop groups, **Michael Columbia** and **Icy Demons**.

Ryan heightened his profile in 2007 when he became the regular drummer at a weekly residency in Chicago with **Alive In the Woods**, a talent-laden quintet featuring **Jason Stein**, **Josh Berman**, **Matt Schneider** and **Anton Hatwicht**. Maintaining many of his Chicago ties since moving to LA in 2010, he performs with Cursive singer/guitarist **Tim Kasher**, Herculaneum, Icy Demons, **Harmonize Most High**, and **Aleks Eva**, and recently recorded a collection of vocal-and-drum music under the moniker **Ether Feather**.

### **TIM YOUNG**

Originally hailing from the San Francisco Bay Area, Tim Young established himself on the Seattle scene in the late 1980s with the adventurous band **Scallywags**. He forged a fruitful creative alliance with keyboardist **Wayne Horvitz**, performing in his rock band **Zony Mash** and chamber jazz ensemble **Sweeter Than the Day**. During his two decades in Seattle he also collaborated with many of the most creative musicians in the Pacific Northwest, including **Bill Frisell**, **Julian Priester**, **Obo Addy**, **Robin Holcomb**, **Matt Chamberlain**, and **Skerik**. When he's not leading his own projects, like **Thruster!**, **Re:Agent**, or **The Youngs** (his trio with his wife, vocalist/drummer **Eryn Young**), he's been sought after by a stylistically vast array of artists, including **David Sylvian**, **Beck**, **Rufus Wainwright**, **Belinda Carlisle**, **Benmont Tench**, **Fiona Apple**, **Rebecca Pidgeon**, **Marc Ribot**, and **John Zorn**. Based in LA for the past five years, he's created a heralded trio with **Kneebody's** rhythm section tandem of **Kaveh Rastegar** (bass) and **Nate Wood** (drums). "He the ultimate chameleon," Ryan says. "He always finds a space of his own within the context and he is as at home in a blistering haze of neo-psychedelia as he is accompanying a lounge singer."

### **DEVIN HOFF**

**Devin Hoff** was born in Fort Collins, Colo. and came of age musically on the Bay Area scene in the mid 1990s. Quickly recognized as an invaluable creative force, he forged powerful alliances with several drummers, including the protean **Ches Smith** (with whom he created the duo **Good For Cows**) and the insuperable groove master **Scott Amendola** (with whom he performed in the collective trio **Plays Monk** with clarinetist **Ben Goldberg** and in **The Nels Cline Singers**).

By the time he left Northern California about five years ago he had worked extensively with **Vijay Iyer**, **Graham Connah**, **Howard Wiley**, **Hugh Ragin**, **Carla Bozulich**, and launched his first band, the **Redressers** with Ches Smith, **Carla Kihlstedt**, and **Marika Hughes**. A relatively brief residency in Chicago yielded dozens of promising musical relationships, including recording with **Ken Vandermark's** **Made To Break**, and a brief acquaintance with Ryan that led to his involvement in Sand. He's appeared on more than 100 albums, composed music for film, dance and theater, and has developed and recorded repertoire for solo bass.

### **PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS**

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