



Bio information: **HENRY KAISER & RAY RUSSELL**

Title: ***THE CELESTIAL SQUID*** (Cuneiform Rune 403) Format: CD / DIGITAL

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FILE UNDER: JAZZ / AVANT-JAZZ / IMPROV

Uncaged Session Ace Ray Russell Makes Long-Awaited Return to Guitar's Outer Limits Alongside Experimental Guitarist Henry Kaiser on *The Celestial Squid*

Guitar summits don't ascend higher than when legendary British free-jazz pioneer and longtime session ace **Ray Russell** meets the brilliant California avant-improv overachiever and Antarctic diver **Henry Kaiser** in the realm of *The Celestial Squid*. An album as cosmically evocative as its title, *The Celestial Squid* marks both a promising new partnership and a return to the outer-limits sensibility that informed Russell's earliest work. With sixteen albums as a leader and more than countless session performances to his credit, including the early **James Bond** film scores, Russell is returning to his bone-rattling, noise-rocking roots for the first time since 1971. You'll be shaken and stirred as Kaiser, Russell, and eight super friends deliver a no-holds-barred, free-range sonic cage match. They evoke improvised music's past, present, and future while proving that free jazz can still be good, clean, liberating fun.

Russell created some of the early '70s' most outrageously outside music. *Live at the ICA: June 11th 1971* is a particularly hallmark work of guitar shock-and-awe. Russell's "stabbing, singing notes and psychotic runs up the fretboard have nothing to do with scalular architecture," wrote *All Music's* Thom Jurek, "but rather with viscera and tonal exploration." Russell anticipated the wildest and most intrepid vibrations of **Terje Rypdal**, **Dave Fuzinski**, **Sonic Youth**, **Keiji Haino**, **Tisziji Muñoz**, **Alan Licht** (who contributes liner notes), and their boundary-dissolving ilk. Russell is hardly a niche performer, though. Untold millions of music and film fans have actually, if unknowingly, already enjoyed Russell's riffs – at least if they saw any of the James Bond films that **John Barry** scored, beginning with *From Dr. No* in 1962.

Although he subsequently released several highly regarded solo albums –including his 2006 **Cuneiform** debut *Goodbye Svengali*, a tribute to **Gil Evans**, and 2013's *Now, More Than Ever*, on **Abstract Logix** – Russell would not make an album anywhere near as potent as *June 11th 1971* until West Coast guitar experimentalist **Henry Kaiser** called him out of the blue and asked if he would be interested in co-leading an ensemble in the style of his '71 masterpiece. Russell was surprised and delighted by the offer, and readily accepted. Why had he waited so long to once again explore the free-jazz spaceways you might well wonder? Simple – no one had asked him to do so.

But inviting his favorite guitarists to come out and play is one of the many different things that guitarist-producer-filmmaker-diver **Henry Kaiser** does. Since picking up the guitar at the relatively late age of twenty, Kaiser has been erasing the boundaries of improvised music with his unique combination of humor and discipline for nearly four decades. His discography includes scrupulously "outside" solo albums such as *Aloha, It's a Wonderful Life*, *Everything Forever*, and *Domo Arigato Derek Sensei* (a tribute to musical mentor **Derek Bailey**); exciting group efforts such as his remarkably faithful **Jerry Garcia** tribute project, *Eternity Blue*, and *Live, Love, Larf & Loaf* alongside **John French**, **Fred Frith**, and **Richard Thompson**; and influential cross-cultural collaborations with musicians from Asia (*Buddhist Stories*), Scandinavia (*The Sweet Sunny North*), Russia (*Popular Science*), and Madagascar (*A World Out of Time*, with **David Lindley**). When not making music, he has produced movies with **Werner Herzog**, directed many hours of science TV himself, and recently dived for ten seasons beneath Antarctic ice as a research scientist.

While he may not have been prolific as a soloist, Ray Russell has been anything but inactive. Since the mid-'60s, Russell's studio work has made him one of the world's most highly respected session musician-composers. Over four decades, Russell's credits would include dates with **Lulu**, **David Bowie**, **Paul McCartney**, **Gil Evans**, **Phil Collins**, **Art Garfunkel**, **Marvin Gaye**, and **Heaven 17**. A member of the **John Barry Seven** during the sixties, Russell has appeared on more than a half-dozen of the film composer's James Bond scores – which is to say that nearly everyone on the planet has heard him at some point. And where **John McLaughlin** found fame and fortune abroad with **Miles Davis** and the **Mahavishnu Orchestra**, Ray Russell forged a much more English parallel career in jazz.

So on April 12, 2014, Henry Kaiser and Ray Russell – along with drummers **Weasel Walter** and **William Winant**, bassists **Michael Manring** (electric) and **Damon Smith** (acoustic), and saxophonists **Steve Adams**, **Joshua Allen**, **Phillip Greenlief**, and **Aram Shelton** – entered Berkeley, California's **Fantasy Studios** for a day-long session that resulted in *The Celestial Squid*, a nearly eighty-minute embryonic journey through the deepest waters and most cosmic heights of improvised music. Except for melodic heads and compositional structures, everything on *The Celestial Squid* is improvised, down to some astonishing extemporaneous horn

[press release continued on verso]

arrangements. While *The Celestial Squid* echoes the raw energy and youthful bravado of Russell's earliest achievements, this music synergizes the combined power and imagination of all ten of these musical masters into a force to be reckoned with.

While the doubling of musicians is reminiscent of **Ornette Coleman's Prime Time**, *The Celestial Squid* marks Russell's first recording with a second lead guitarist. Not coincidentally, Russell was one of Kaiser's early guitar influences and, as such, enters Kaiser's discography on the latest in a series of albums the Santa Cruz-based musician has recorded with other guitarists he admires, including **Derek Bailey**, **David Lindley**, **Richard Thompson**, **Jerry Garcia**, and **Harvey Mandel**, among many others. *The Celestial Squid* is all about double trouble, and Kaiser takes Russell's earliest and most sonically extreme guitar vocabulary as the launching pad for some of the most daring yet sympathetic playing of his career. Russell, meanwhile, plays with an unerring sense of control no matter how far afield he flies, drawing upon the well-honed and thoroughly unique jazz, rock, and funk modalities he has developed over his past several solo albums.

The Celestial Squid kicks off with **Steve Adams' "guKTen LIMPo,"** an inky blast of futuristic jazz-rock featuring stuttering horn lines, double-drum fever, whammy-bar wizardry, basses in your faces, and more maximalist freedom in nine minutes than even the wickedest messengers pack into a double album. **"In Another Life"** is a Russell ballad in which the guitarists unwind Theremin-like lines over the saxophone quartet in a state of constant prologue highlighted by Kaiser's digitally delayed elfen communications with the **Deep Unreal**. The funk returns in **"That Darn Squid,"** a playfully epic Kaiser tune (or maybe 'toon) suggesting aquatic, poly-tempo shenanigans, choreographed by **Miles** at his most dangerously electric.

Kaiser offers a short and spiky baritone-acoustic introduction to Adams' **"The Enumeration"** (dedicated to the late saxophonist **Glenn Spearman**), which levitates slowly and eventually explodes into a serious frenzy before returning to its upright position. Drummer **Weasel Walter's "Victims"** crashes through several walls of sound and mystery before arriving at its merciless conclusion. Russell returns with **"Disinterested Bystander,"** a stately spy-rock shuffle that includes much of the guitarists' saltiest and most conversational soloing. *The Celestial Squid* closes with its longest and most abstract track, saxophonist **Joshua Allen's "Construction #14,"** which features the sax quartet as prime movers exploring a complicated score composed and conducted by Josh in **Cecil Taylor's** cell structure notation, amid thick, constantly changing waves and cross-currents of sonic material. Somehow the guitarists manage to escape being crashed against the rocks of the two drummers and emerge unscathed from the maelstrom.

For more information on Henry Kaiser & Ray Russell, please visit:
www.henrykaiserguitar.com - www.rayrussell.co.uk - www.cuneiformrecords.com

THE CELESTIAL SQUID: BANDMEMBERS

GUITAR

HENRY KAISER – guitar
<http://www.henrykaiserguitar.com>

RAY RUSSELL – guitar
<http://www.rayrussell.co.uk>

SAXOPHONE

STEVE ADAMS - saxophone
<http://saxsteveadams.com>

JOSHUA ALLEN - saxophone
<http://www.edgetonerecords.com/allen.html>

PHILLIP GREENLIEF – saxophone
<https://twitter.com/Phillip34446911>

http://www.evandermusic.com/artist_detail.asp?artist_id=117
<https://www.facebook.com/phillip.greenlief?fref=ts>

ARAM SHELTON - saxophone
<http://www.aramshelton.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Aram-Shelton/44020957338>

BASS

MICHAEL MANRING - electric bass
<http://www.manthing.com/Manthing/home.html>

<https://twitter.com/michaelxmanring>
<https://www.facebook.com/michaelmanring?sk=wall>

DAMON SMITH - acoustic bass
<http://www.balancepointacoustics.com/damon.php>

<https://www.facebook.com/damon.smith1?fref=ts>

DRUMS

WEASEL WALTER - drums
http://nowave.pair.com/weasel_walter/

<https://www.facebook.com/weasel.walter1?fref=ts>

WILLIAM WINANT - drums
<http://williamwinant.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/william.winant?fref=ts>

HENRY KAISER / RAY RUSSELL BIOS

RAY RUSSELL: BIO INFORMATION

Ray Russell began his career as a member of the **John Barry Seven's** final lineup, which he joined as a replacement for longtime member **Vic Flick**. He played with Barry septet until 1965 and subsequently joined **Georgie Fame & the Blue Flames**, where he played the sort of jazz-R&B fusion he would focus on for the next several years. He worked alongside **Chris Spedding**, **Jack Bruce**, and **Alan Skidmore** in the **Mike Gibbs Band**. During the seventies he played with prog-rockers **Mouse**, jazz-rockers **Nucleus**, and **Rock Workshop** (with vocalist **Alex Harvey**). He played with **Roxy Music's Andy Mackay** on British TV series **Rock Follies**. He also played with **Stackridge**, **Smith & D'Abo**, and the **British Orchestra**, with whom he played the music of **Gil Evans**.

As a session musician, he has recorded and/or toured with **Lulu**, **Paul McCartney**, **Cat Stevens**, **Van Morrison**, **Tina Turner**, **Bryan Ferry**, **David Bowie**, **Phil Collins**, **Scott Walker**, **Art Garfunkel**, **Marvin Gaye**, and **Heaven 17**. As a bandleader and solo artist influenced by the likes of **John Coltrane** and **Archie Shepp**, Russell recorded a trio of albums – *Turn Circle* (1968), *Dragon Hill* (1969), and *June 11th 1971: Live At The ICA* (1971) – that suggested a jazz-guitar talent as powerfully inventive as **John McLaughlin**. He has been cited as the first guitarist in England with a pedal-board setup. Russell's subsequent albums – including *Rites and Rituals* (1971), *Secret Asylum* (1973), and *Ready or Not* (1979) – lay mainly in a jazz-fusion vein highlighting his exceptional guitar vocabulary of long, swooping tones and sudden changes of mood, a style sometimes reminiscent of **Ray Buchanan** crossed with **McCoy Tyner**. In another mode, Russell draws on the **Celtic** tradition with dulcimer-like playing and shimmering bottleneck effects. In recent years, Russell released a series of albums that were well received by critics and the public alike, thrusting him again in the spotlight. These recent albums include the **Gil Evans** tribute *Goodbye Svengali* (2006), *Myths & Legends*, and 2013's *Now More Than Ever*, which finds him exploring modern prog- and jazz-rock once again.

HENRY KAISER: BIO INFORMATION

Grammy winner **Henry Kaiser** is widely recognized as one of the most creative and innovative guitarists, improvisers, and producers in the fields of rock, jazz, world, and contemporary experimental musics. The California-based musician is one of the most extensively recorded as well, having appeared on more than 250 different albums and contributed to countless television and film soundtracks. Kaiser produces and contributes to a staggering number of recorded projects. And he performs frequently throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, and Japan both in group configurations, as a soloist, and in ad hoc concerts of freely improvised music with a host of diverse instrumentalists.

How versatile is Kaiser? A fraction of the artists with whom he has recorded and/or performed include **Evan Parker**, **John Oswald**, **Ryuichi Sakamoto**, **Toshinori Kondo**, **Steve Lacy**, **John Stevens**, **Michael Stipe**, **Herbie Hancock**, **John Zorn**, **Wadada Leo Smith**, **Bill Laswell**, **John Stevens**, **Steve Smith**, **Drumbo (John French)**, **Chris Cutler**, **Andy West**, **Fred Frith**, **Terry Riley**, **Scott Amendola**, **Michael Snow**, **Diamanda Galas**, **Thomas Mapfumo**, **Phil Lesh**, **Lukas Ligeti**, **Cecil Taylor**, **Merl Saunders**, **Tom Constanten**, **Negativland**, and **Michael McClure**.

Kaiser's numerous Cuneiform releases include *Lemon Fish Tweezer* (solo, 1975); *The Siamese Stepbrothers* (1995); a duo recording with **Fred Frith**, *Friends and Enemies* (1999); two volumes—*Sky Garden* (2004) and *Upriver* (2005)—of "Yo Miles!," the electric **Miles Davis** project he co- led with **Wadada Leo Smith**; and *Healing Force: Songs of Albert Ayler* (2007). He also curated and appeared on *156 Strings: Nineteen Totally Originally Acoustic Guitarists* (2002); and appeared on *Unsettled Scores* (1995), two various artist recordings released by Cuneiform.

But that's not all! Henry also has a lifetime habit of collaborating with his many guitar heroes, including **Jerry Garcia**, **Derek Bailey**, **Bill Frisell**, **Nels Cline**, **D'Gary**, **Hans Reichel**, **Sonny Sharrock**, **Barry Melton**, **Mike Keneally**, **David Torn**, **Fred Frith**, **Davey Williams**, **Eugene Chadbourne**, **David Lindley**, **John Abercrombie**, **Bruce Anderson**, **Amos Garrett**, **Glenn Phillips**, **Freddie Roulette**, **Bob Weir**, **Steve Kimock**, **Jody Stecher**, **Jim O'Rourke**, **Martin Simpson**, **Elliot Ingber**, and **Harvey Mandel**.

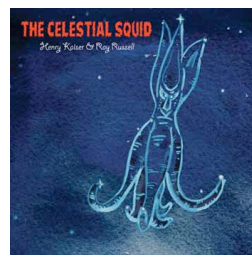
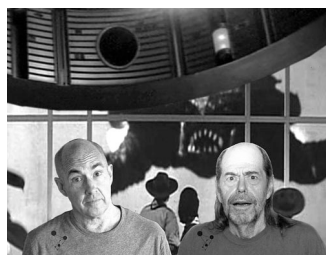
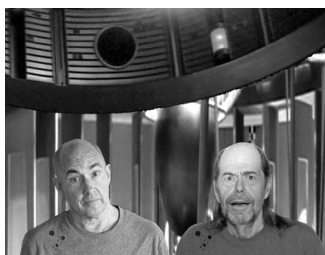
Since 1972, Kaiser has had a parallel career in the film and television industry, in which he has worked as a producer, director, and soundtrack composer. He has directed and produced many hours of science programming. He received an **Academy Award** nomination in 2008 for his work as producer of **Werner Herzog's Encounters At The End Of The World**, for which he also served as underwater cameraman and soundtrack composer. Kaiser worked on three other Herzog films: *The Wild Blue Yonder*, *Grizzly Man*, and *Little Dieter Needs To Fly*.

Henry is also a scientific diver in the **United States Antarctic Program**. He has more Antarctic under-the-ice footage in films and TV shows than any other cameraman. With ten scientific diving deployments to Antarctica, he probably has more dives under fast ice than any other professional videographer. The Antarctic reaches of Youtube are littered with his many short underwater videos shot under Ross Sea ice.

Kaiser has recorded four albums of cross-cultural collaborations with Korean musicians **Sang Won Park** and **Jin Hi Kim**. He is also known for ten albums he has made with musicians from Madagascar, his many collaborations with musicians from Sweden and Norway, his album with Zimbabwe's **Thomas Mapfumo** and **Wadada Leo Smith**, several collaborations with Vietnamese musicians, and his production work on six albums of music from Burma, as well as numerous productions with Hindustani musicians such as **Ali Akbar Khan** and **Brij Bhushan Kabra**. Most recently he recorded two albums of collaboration with Carnatic musicians from South India, *You Can't Get There From Here*, playing together with a Chinese gu-qin player from Beijing and two other American Improvisers.

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

Digital [High-Resolution] versions of these images are available for download on the **Henry Kaiser & Ray Russell** artist page @ www.cuneiformrecords.com



CELESTIAL SQUID INTERVIEW WITH HENRY KAISER, DECEMBER 2014

Why is Ray Russell an important hero for you?

I bought Ray's first LPs as they came out, back in the ancient days. I recall that they would suddenly appear in the Tower Records Berkeley import bin, usually one copy of each. I would grab them. Nobody else that I knew seemed to have copies back then – possibly because I'd grabbed the only available copy.

Ray was kind of a big mystery. I did not know his history, as there was no internet to discover that with. Nor did there seem to be interviews in the British music press, like *Melody Maker*. At first he seemed like another branch of the tree that yielded John McLaughlin's *Extrapolation* album, but behind Ray you could hear a bit more free jazz and willingness to experiment. Then, with the albums *Live At The ICA*, *Rites & Rituals*, and *Secret Asylum*, he seemed to go totally nuts in an expressive way with the guitar; forging a new path with where he had never been before; with the way ahead illuminated by Sonny Sharrock and Jimi Hendrix. It seemed to be free improv as well as free jazz – but Ray was not playing with the typical British free improv crowd that gathered around the SME and around Incus records. Was he an outsider among outsiders, or what? There was no way to figure that out back then.

Nowadays with all of Ray's history visible via the internet, one can easily grok his story and admire that he was a brave guitarist to make the choices that he made. I've always admired the few who can work in both experimental and commercial musics to make a living. Ray was a good role model who showed me the reality of it; his practical success at doing that gave me courage to do the same myself in the past few decades.

As a guitarist, Ray is amazing! He's a truly original and amazingly expressive player. Ray *always* has so much to say on guitar. He speaks clearly and elegantly with his instrument.

What was it like working in the studio with Ray?

Due perhaps to his years of experience as a studio player, Ray is confident, efficient and quick in the studio. We played some complicated charts that were set in front of us, with no rehearsal. Ray was always right there with a perfect expression and expansion of what was on the paper from the very first take. In fact, everything on the album is the first or second take, with no run-throughs.

One thing that impressed me especially was noticing that when Ray was playing a chart that had harmony or unison melody lines with the horn players, from that very first take he knew how the four horns would phrase what was on paper, and was in perfect unity and harmony with them.

Near the end of the "That Darn Squid" track Ray and I have a little exchange in the mode of his *STAINED ANGEL MORNING*, playing together as a duet. That was a really cool moment for me. Feeling like Stevie Ray Vaughn must have felt when playing with Albert King or Albert Collins or BB King. The 'playing with a hero and being accepted as a colleague' thing.

I understand that you worked really quickly in the studio for this project?

We walked into the studio cold. Meeting as a group for the first time, when we set up in the room in the late morning. By dinnertime, we had completed the album. I come from the *time = money (and time is a-wasting)* school of music and film production. Ray, obviously, came from the same school, by necessity, from his many years of successful studio work.

What kinda album is this anyway? What genre does it fit into?

We planned and recorded this project without even thinking about genre or category. I had told Ray that we wanted to provide a frame for him to revisit the more experimental context of his early 70's work. But, then and now, it's difficult to point and say if this is jazz, or free jazz, or improvisation, or rock, or whatever. For me, it's everything that I grew up with as a guitarist. It's also all the kinds of stuff that Cuneiform records has put out over the years, all mixed up. A natural and not-particularly-planned fusion of many, many things.

Why the choice of the particular 4 sax players?

The San Francisco Bay Area has had a strong and cooperative improv scene since the mid 70's. Nowadays, improvisers from this large community of musicians often get the chance to play together in larger ensembles, such as Josh Allen's Deconstruction Orchestra or larger ensembles put together by ROVA. I picked 4 sax players who knew each other, and had worked together with each other in different ensembles (but never all 4 together in the same ensemble) to get both reliability and unpredictability. They were willing to do it for love and fun, there being no money in this kinda music lately. It's also a quartet of 4 sax players who would NEVER normally work together at once. I think of it like one of the 60's heist movies where someone puts together an unlikely team to rob the big casino. A crazy mismatched team that somehow succeeds at an impossible task. One of the cool things about recording the album is that we did not generally choose a solo order before we recorded the tracks. So what you hear in real time is just one of the players stepping forward to grab the baton, so to speak. A nice set of surprises to make the session more exciting.

Why a double rhythm section?

Well, two drums are always fun and exciting; as well as challenging for the drummers. Weasel and Willy had worked together a lot and I knew that they enjoyed playing together and could both take full responsibility for not getting in each other's way.

Michael and Damon have totally different strengths as bass players. They seem an unlikely combination on a project. However, if you know their personalities, you would know that there could not be two more cooperative bass players together in one band.

Using a big band here both creates more surprises and challenges, and also provides a plan for 'division-of-labor', where any played musician can relax and leave space, with the trust that someone else will tastefully fill that space with inspiration and good ideas. The musical environment became a giant, cosmic, celestial ocean of startling musical ideas for a big and scary space squid to fly around in.

Could you play this material live?

We could play this material with any size band of our choosing on-stage tomorrow, with a 2 hour rehearsal. I learned a lot from another hero, Wadada Leo Smith, in our years of doing our Yo Miles! project. He showed me many ways to get players to quickly and efficiently realize creative music with little or no rehearsal. Thanks to him for being a great bandleader example to me; which greatly fueled *The Celestial Squid*.

EXCERPTS FROM the LINER NOTES to *THE CELESTIAL SQUID*:

“...it’s the mid ’80s, and I have 4 guitar heroes: **John Abercrombie, Allan Holdsworth, Derek Bailey and Henry Kaiser**. ...I remember a real discontent with the instrument, as if it wasn’t enough, and that is where Mr. Bailey and Mr. Kaiser came in. With Derek Bailey, he used the whole body of the instrument... With Henry Kaiser, I learned that it could even go beyond the instrument itself, to what you do with that tiny electrical current that jets out of the pickups. This appealed to the nascent engineer in me...

Cut to the chase: it’s 1990 and, thanks to Mr. Bailey, I get to meet Henry. Henry decides to take mercy on some dumb kid and invites me to California to “organize his record collection.” ... **I can trace everything back to that week, and even these liner notes are all because of those few days looking at the endless rows of glorious spines.** ... I was drawn like a divining wand to the records in the “improvisation” section. On one special day, Henry introduced me to **Loren Mazzacane, Takayanagi Masayuki, Haino Keiji** and, most bewildering to me, **Ray Russell**. ...Ray Russell...was on CBS, RCA...how could I not have known about him?

But that’s the point, I *did* know him. *When* I learned about him didn’t matter, **the strength of the music reached out to me**, as it had before, and it still does now. ... **That’s why *The Celestial Squid* is so special to me, and I hope to you, as well. Here are two of the greats...no, the greatest. It’s a love letter to the past, which is also the future.** Improvisation is maybe the only thing to which you can’t say “Ah...I’ve already done that.” Something which is always new is never old.

Jim O’Rourke

Tokyo, September 2014

“When Henry mentioned during a phone conversation last winter that he was about to do a record with **Ray Russell**, the obscure but legendary British guitarist that Henry himself and **Rudolph Grey** both hipped me to a quarter of a century ago, my jaw dropped. That’s a heavy combination even by Henry’s standards—like, **Coryell/McLaughlin Spaces-heavy**. ...Henry proposed that they make a record together where Ray would slip back into his early ’70s electric free-jazz style, when his playing was at its most manic, and Ray was game...

...Henry made it a big band outing (a larger ensemble than Ray’s early ’70s groups, and without the synthesizer textures that mark recent Russell releases), calling on his frequent collaborators **Weasel Walter, Damon Smith, Michael Manring, and William Winant** for the rhythm section and then selecting a diverse foursome of Bay Area saxophonists. There was no rehearsal; the musicians came in with head melodies and overall structures, and the rest was improvised.

The end result feels like one of those earlier Russell albums—particularly the tracks on *Rites and Rituals* with the expanded horn section—teleported into the 21st century, as well as being clearly recognizable as a Henry Kaiser production. Throughout, Henry takes the whammy bar/feedback dive bombs of Ray’s titanic 1973 freak-out track “**Stained Angel Morning**” as a launching pad and heads straight into the stratosphere, while Ray stands toe-to-toe with him in the high-energy passages, and takes several exquisite solos that are equally convincing as rock and jazz—this is dual citizenship we’re talking about here, folks, not “versatility” or “eclecticism.” **Ray is the rare session musician who is not only an artist in his own right, but also whose skill in multiple genres is a means to an end...not an end in itself. He’s never recorded with another guitarist before, at least not as a leader, but this pairing with Henry, a highly unique trans-idiomatic guitar master himself, is truly inspired.** Look beyond the surface of this “crazy improv record” and you’ll find the true promise of the eternally futuristic musical fusions of the ’60s deeply embedded in these 77 minutes.

Alan Licht

Brooklyn, October 2014

WHAT THE PRESS HAVE SAID ABOUT

HENRY KAISER

LEMON FISH TWEEZER

CUNEIFORM RUNE 45

1992

“Henry Kaiser says he views the guitar as an instrument for exploration, and music as the means... “For me, music’s about working together with different people and it’s about self-expression,” says the guitarist “It’s about trying to find new things - new to me and new to the audience, and trying to put them out there in front of people.”...Each of the 17 tracks on “Lemon Fish Tweezer” is like a two-minute gaze through a portal into a new world, at times a new galaxy.”
—Laura Outerbridge, *The Washington Times*, 10/22/92

“Kaiser is one of the few with the courage to take the guitar into the 21st century while maintaining a foot in this one by working on more mainstream projects with Richard Thompson and David Lindley among others.”
—C.W. Vrtacek, *Advocate Newspapers*, 1/28/93

“...this fine new collection exclusively examines his staggering improvisation skills... an excellent overview.... Kaiser tempers his experiments with a sense of purpose and a surprising accessibility.”
—Pete Margasak, *Chicago Tribune*, 12/3/92

“[Kaiser’s] role as an innovator in American improvisation...is documented on...”Lemon Fish Tweezer”...a restless creativity limited only by what you can do with a thin steel string.... It’s essential, period.”
—MB, *Freeway*, Winter 1994

“...excellent sorta-overview of Henry Kaiser’s rich career as a top-flight American guitar improviser. ... this is an essential release... generally excellent stuff, some of it brilliant. Highly recommended.”
—Peter Margasak, *Butt Rag*, #8, May 1993

“A true explorer, [Kaiser] really does take the guitar where no man has taken it before....Kaiser brings together a sense of fearless improvisational adventure, theoretical discipline, chops, and a crazed imagination to tell tales and evoke emotions through pure sonic manipulation....”
—Bill Meyers, *Moe*, v.4 #3, winter 1992

“With his technical type of guitar exploration, Kaiser is distinct... the emotions and timbres reflected in these works are very diverse, reflecting his interest in incorporating all worldly sounds into his repertoire. ... exceptionally fun examples of good musicianship.”
—Ian Christie, *Alternative Press*, #53, Dec. 1992

“...a fascinating release. The guitar is not so much a musical instrument as it is a voice, capable of expressing a gamut of moods and emotions.”
—Carol Schutzbank, *B-Side*, Dec. 92-Jan. 93

"Twenty years into his string-torturing career, documented on the *Lemon Fish Tweezer* compilation ... avant-guitar improviser Henry Kaiser has yet to run out of ways to make the instrument squawk and sing, attack and assuage."
—MJ, *Washington City Paper*, 10/23/92

"*Lemon Fish Tweezer*...is endlessly colorful, witty, and as charming and entertaining as outside music gets. ...every cut...sounds fresh and original....For those unfamiliar with Kaiser's improvisational virtuosity, *Lemon Fish Tweezer* is a great place to start."
—Michael Dawson, *Goldmine*, 10/2/92

"...these solo guitar improvisations celebrate the unusual and the untried, and are the product of Kaiser's delightfully overactive imagination. Using hard body, hollow body and acoustic guitars - to say nothing of a wonderfully peculiar assortment of digital effects - Kaiser creatively indulges and commingles his interests in traditional, avant-garde and exotic musics....For all its daring, though, this is not music designed to furrow brows. Kaiser, after all, is having to much fun stretching the boundaries of the guitar not to let it show."
—Mike Joyce, *The Washington Post*, 10/23/92

"That one made me laugh. That was Henry Kaiser. He has so much energy in his playing....5 stars. That was a cool piece. I like the way he uses the effects. You don't hear a box turning on or off. That's my goal: to make the effects as invisible and organic to the piece as possible."

—Bill Frisell, commenting on *Lemon Fish Tweezer* in *Down Beat* "Blindfold Test", May 1993

HENRY KAISER & FRED FRITH FRIENDS & ENEMIES CUNEIFORM RUNE 117/118 1999

"Between them, Kaiser and Frith have done as much to revolutionize electric guitar playing as pretty much all their contemporaries put together. ... *Friends & Enemies* is at once an important document, a wake-up call for would-be envelope-pushing guitar players and... a total blast"

—Simon Hopkins, *Motion*, Oct. 20, 1999

"Two and a half hours of essential guitar music distilled from a collaboration of 20 years. A gem!"

—David Lewis, *Exclaim!*, July 1999

"Henry Cow icon, Fred Frith and shred rover Henry Kaiser....the telepathy between the duo was groundbreaking before modern players such as Sonic Youth adopted their novel approach... The set serves as a cornerstone archive on a healthy dialogue between two innovators in search of the nirvana via the less traveled road."

—Jeff Melton, *Expose*, #19 May 2000

"In stretching the boundaries of sounds usually associated with rock guitars... Frith and Kaiser also set up an exchange that was foreign to most... Prompting more than a few closet guitar heroes to rethink the possibilities and probabilities... its interesting to hear what Thurston and Nels and Jim were listening to when they made their move. A worthy perspective piece."

—Richard Proplesch, *Focus*, #133, 9/16-29/99

"The destination is "out" on this arty noise album of dueling, cacophonous guitars.... these recordings, originally released in 1979 and 1983, were way ahead of their time."

—Tom Tearaway Schulte, *Survivor*, Sept. 1999

"Perhaps the perfect mind-meld of Frith's *Guitar Solos*, Beefheart's *Trout Mask Replica* and Kaiser's *Outside Aloha Pleasure* reissue, this is sonic manna for any egghead interested in the innumerate possibilities of the guitar. Rating = 5=Indispensable"

—Aaron Burgess, *Alternative Press*, 10/99

"If you ever hear someone complain that "experimental music" doesn't have warmth, humor or guts, hand 'em this mighty slab: 2 CDs, filled with weird squiggly guitar lines, drum machine wonders, intricate interactions that come from a place nobody else has visited."

—Jeff Bagato, *Mole*, #13, 2000

"Frith's and Kaiser's sharp-eared free improvising navigated a bold, unfaltering course through the jagged terrain of noise aesthetics, their extending playing techniques sculpting a new electric guitarphonics based on the 60s groundwork of Bailey, Rowe and Hendrix. Although many guitarists now do likewise, *With Friends* remains a vital document and, to my ears, still unsurpassed in this field...."

—Chris Blackford, *Rubberneck*, #30, 1999

YO MILES!: HENRY KAISER & WADADA LEO SMITH SKY GARDEN CUNEIFORM RUNE 191/192 2004

"Davis's electric albums were conceived in such a muddle of emotions and market ambitions that most of their creative energy was dissipated in a critical debate... Smith and Kaiser have recovered some of their radical energy and reapplied it in the context of a new technology that gives this music clarity as well as thudding power. ...if you want to see where his example leads us, this is the way to go."

—Brian Morton, *The Wire*, #128, Oct. 2004

"...both guitarist Henry Kaiser and trumpet player Wadada Leo Smith, the collection's creators, hold a particularly comprehensive understanding of Miles Davis' music... What's particularly astounding... is that the chemistry of their assembled entourage mirrors that of Davis' own alchemical ensembles. ... Simply put: *Yo Miles! Sky Garden* frequently feels as if the manifestation of Davis himself had a hand in crafting its contents. **4 1/2 stars out of 5** (4 Stars: Excellent; 5 Stars: Can't Live Without It!)"—John Metzger, *The Music Box*, July 2004, Vol.11, #7; www.musicboxonline.com

"...The "Yo Miles" crew has figured out a way to take new chances with music that was always beyond category. Factor in the crystal-clear recording on this two-disc set, and you've got a slam-dunk."

—Richard Scheinin, *Mercury News*, June 25, 2004, www.mercurynews.com

"As for the two leaders, **Kaiser is an almost infinitely adaptable guitarist who can channel Hendrix, Pete Cosey or even John McLaughlin with consummate ease.** ...Wadada Smith is the real surprise. ...he's a great trumpet player who seems very much at ease in the electric fusion bag. In fact, everyone playing on this CD... seems to be having a blast. ...it's well worth picking up; a fine extended homage to Davis and joyous, powerful and poignant music in its own right."—Bill Tilland, *BBCi*, Sept. 9, 2004, http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/jazz/reviews/kaisersmith_sky.shtml

"Smith meets the challenge...he's a commanding presence, invoking Davis but preserving his own identity. Kaiser plays a less conspicuous, mutable role, adapting to fit the music without explicit reference to Davis' guitarists. ... Tchicai's work on soprano and tenor is consistently thoughtful and engaging. In all, *Yo Miles!* makes a convincing case for the continuing vitality of Davis' electric grooves. Recorded in a hybrid Super Audio CD format, the disc's sound quality is superior. **3 1/2 stars.**"

—Jon Andrews, *Downbeat*, Sept. 2004

"**Guitarist Henry Kaiser has never been short on ideas.**...So it wasn't a huge leap when, in 1998, he decided to form a project with other Bay Area musicians to explore the mid-70s electric music of Miles Davis. What could have been merely an interesting footnote or tribute jam band became much more due to his inspired choice of Wadada Leo Smith to fill the trumpet chair. ...worth checking out"

—Michael Rosenstein, *One Final Note*, Aug. 3, 2004, www.onefinalnote.com

"Ray Russell's back with his first solo record in 14 years and, man, it's good. ...a staggeringly wide-ranging album. There's some of the free jazz-rock Russell pioneered in the 60s and 70s on "Everywhere" and in the wild guitar/drums section on the title track. But there's also a softer, tender side present... it never sounds cluttered or fragmented. Instead it moves always easily and convincingly through styles and modes. It's Russell's sound that dominates but that takes nothing from the bravura playing of Gary Husband and Russell's daughter, Amy Baldwin...or from Miles Evans' on "Goodbye Svengali". Fusion or jazz-rock rarely sounded this good. 3 stars"
 –Duncan Heining, *JazzWise*, Feb. 2006, #94

"Given to lyrical flights in the middle of buzzsaw frenzies, and taking full advantage of the improvisational possibilities opened up by rock guitar, **Russell is a clear antecedent to contemporary celebrated stylists like Nels Cline.** ...Russell has returned with this loving tribute to Gil Evans... The themes he's written are tailor-made for gnarly group workouts, and to assist him Russell has called in several different rhythm sections.. At the center of the small group music is the tonal contrast between Russell's now ethereal guitar washes and the dirty Fender Rhodes... An ominous electric Miles vibe is inevitable..."

But what ultimately satisfies is the imagination of Russell's phrasing and his harmonic imagination. ...Whether on intimate miniatures...or swaggering funk...Russell's wide-open exuberance...cuts through..."
 –Jason Bivins, *Dusted*, April 9, 2006

"... Russell's *Goodbye Svengali*...is so heartfelt, so all-encompassing of Evan's genius.....its an expansively emotional panegyric that ranges from evocative and introspective to powerfully extroverted. ...more than any of Russell's previous solo albums, the material lets Russell show his remarkably wide range of stylistic aptitude. ... "Prayer to the Sun/The Fashion Police" a powerful fusion piece showcasing Russell's formidable Hendrix-meets-Sharrock-meets-Beck chops... Elsewhere Russell is more pensive. ..."Without a Trace" and "So Far Away" are melancholy remembrances in an ECM vein...the title track is a eulogy beautifully incorporating both the rich voicings that made Evans so distinctive, and the sense of unfettered and almost subconscious-driven exploration that made him so vital. ...an album that succeeds not only as an intensely personal tribute, but also as a 66-minute introduction to a guitarist whose reputation amongst musicians is unquestionable, but whose lack of visibility with the larger listening public is nothing short of criminal."
 –John Kelman, *All About Jazz*, Feb. 27, 2006

"...an exhilarating throwback to late-60's jazz-rock fusion 4 stars." –David Stubbs, *Uncut*, May 2006

"On the strength of this CD, it's a mystery why Ray Russell has been so severely under-recorded throughout his career. ...Russell...has made only a handful of recordings under his name since 1973, although he has always been in huge demand (for obvious reasons) as a session player. ... Overall, the 11 pieces on this CD...are firmly in the jazz funk/fusion tradition, with obvious nods to the great electric Miles Davis bands. Several gorgeous ballads are perhaps more reminiscent of Pat Metheny's oeuvre, while a solo drone piece, "Wailing Wall", has a strong element of Frippertronic... Russell's technical and creative facility is nothing short of jaw-dropping throughout. He twists notes up, down, and sideways, executes flawless, intricate runs, and display an excruciatingly pure electric tone that pierces the heart. He is also supported on this recording by very capable, long-time musician friends...including drummers Simon Phillips and Gary Husband and bassist Mo Foster, who serve to make the session much more than a guitar showcase. Truly an excellent recording. But please, someone get Russell in the studio again (and again) so that he can share more of his singular talents with the world."
 –Bill Tilland, *All Music Guide*

"Cuneiform's valiant sponsorship of unfairly undervalued British jazz catalysts from an earlier era continues. Guitarist Ray Russell has a resume that stretches back to the '60s...his friendship with Gil Evans is at the heart of *Goodbye Svengali*. ...Guitar-wise, the syntax owes much to the '1980s, with sinuous E-bow and guitar synthesizer...The spirit owes to the decade before that, when a musician's jazz-rock muscularity was all sweat and heavy cudgels. ... the more meditative moments linger... In "Afterglow," Russell's classical guitar is virtually a harp over Husband's misty keyboard. The bittersweet echo guitar of "So Far Away" is required listening for anyone who thinks Dave Gilmour owns that territory. ...should Manfred Eicher have a few weeks off, his new project awaits."
 –Randel McIlroy, *Coda*, May/June 2006

Dedicated to arranger Gil Evans, it features such fusion-rock players such as Mo Foster, Gary Husband, Tony Hymas and Simon Phillips. Though "Blaize"...is pure rock, generally there's a smooth, creamy quality to the playing, especially from guitar and drums, that's immensely enjoyable without being edgy or profound. Russell's tone, especially on the slower tracks "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" and "So Far Away", is the kind of beautiful synthesis of hard and sumptuous found in John McLaughlin's work from the 70s and 80s.
 ...Why the guitarist hasn't released more albums isn't clear, but *Svengali* makes a strong case for him." –Andy Hamilton, *The Wire*, March 2006

"a tribute to the guitarist's mentor and friend Gil Evans, *Goodbye Svengali* covers a lot of territory; loose improvisation recalling some of his 70s classics to full on fusion belters, electronic tone poems, plus a spot of acoustic impressionism... Russell is a fearsomely gifted player who relies on tastes rather than speed, even when teamed up with...fusion legends Anthony Jackson and Simon Phillips. Highlights include the slow burning opening "Everywhere", plus a quietly gutsy rendering of "Goodbye Porkpie Hat" from Russell in duet with Evans...Gil's last recorded appearance... Recommended."
 –Peter Marsh, *BBC Music online*

"From rock to free jazz, fusion and pop, the guitarist has done it all. His newest effort, *Goodbye Svengali*, a tribute to a like-minded spirit (Gil Evans)...Russell is in rare form throughout. ... "Goodbye Svengali" pays tribute to Miles in an indirect way, recalling the Spanish moods that Evans used for Miles on *Sketches of Spain*. The acronym Svengali was Gil Evans' pseudonym, and Russell brings in Evans' son Miles to lay on a sumptuous trumpet part. Of all the tunes on the record, this is the most overtly bebop-oriented, beginning with and almost orchestral them and then devolving into solo space for Russell and Evans. It's a brilliant tribute to Evans the mastermind. ... *Goodbye Svengali* does what the best tribute records do... In invoking not only the music but also the soul of an admired musician, it brings out the best in the artist paying tribute. And Russell here is energetic, thoughtful, and most of all, eclectic." –David Miller, *All About Jazz*, March 20, 2006

"A timeless album that everybody – guitarists in particular – should analyze carefully, containing gorgeous melodies and most excellent fretwork in the middle of a triangle whose corners are occupied by Jeff Beck, Phil Miller and Yo' Miles!" –Massimo Ricci, *Touching Extremes*, April 2006

"...the album combines boiling energy with an elegiac sense of loss. "Goodbye Svengali" is a deeply-felt tribute to Evans, lit up by the fine contributions of Evans' trumpeter son Miles. There's also a surprisingly effective posthumous duet with Gil on "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat," an outtake from a 1988 Russell/Evans session on which Russell has grafted a new guitar track. Russell's guitar-playing is in strong, passionate form throughout...some of the best tracks here are Russell's slow features..."
 –Nate Dorward, *Cadence*, August 2006

"The influence of Evan's broad chordal palette shines throughout this release as does Russell's musicality, versatility and formidable technique. ...A cover of Charles Mingus' "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" features what Russell believes is Evans' final recording, from 1988. Russell took the old mix of Evans playing on Rhodes piano, recorded a new guitar part...for a moving by very energetic posthumous duet. The title track features another Evans, Gils son Miles, who adds a trumpet line...recalling the work of Gil and Miles Davis on their landmark collaboration *Sketches of Spain*. The ethereal "Wailing Wall" is a looping guitar and EBow exercise that unfolds like a deep-space waltz while the playful jazz-funk of "Now Here's The Thing" showcases Russell's fiery rock chops. His gift for melody is also on display...There's even a lovely classical guitar piece...
...*Goodbye Svengali* is a perfect intro to a true guitar master and a jumping-off point for further exploration into Russell's eclectic career."

—Todd Whitesel, **Goldmine**, April 14, 2006

"You probably know Ray Russell's playing even if you've never heard the guy's name. The British guitarist, a pro since 1963, has added licks to James Bond flicks as well as to popular albums by Tina Turner and Robert Plant. Much of his non-session work, however, is... 'underground.' Russell snuck several avant-leaning albums onto CBS in the late '60s ...*June 11th 1971: Live at the ICA* – recently reissued by Sonic Youth's Jim O'Rourke – provides an excellent example of the outer reaches of Russell's aesthetic: wild, wooly and not unlike freakazoid peer Sonny Sharrock. The free spirit's mixed-bag latest is *Goodbye Svengali*, a Gil Evans' tribute, and it lies somewhere between what we've all heard and what only the noisenik crate-diggers can describe in full. ...Splitting the difference may also cleave the audience, but Russell hardly seems like the type to care."

—Brent Burton, **Jazz Times**, May 2006

"Guitarist Ray Russell...wide ranging solo career got into gear during the late 60s and can be viewed as a simultaneous and wilder variant of the same path towards electric jazz that Miles Davis and others took during this time, releasing a number of very collectable and ahead of their time albums, and becoming one of the earliest truly "out" guitarist of the late 60s in the process. "Goodbye Svengali"...mixes dark fusion, lyrical guitar pieces and icy soundscapes. Ray's playing style can be compared to such great players as Sonny and Terje...but also to John McLaughlin, John Abercrombie, and Jeff Beck! Includes performances by noted U.K. fusion/rock players such as Mo Foster, Gary Husband, Tony Hymas, Simon Phillips and others. "

—*Intuitive Music*, Jan. 15, 2006

"On *Goodbye Svengali*, Russell and his cast of guest musicians deliver a stunning late 60s styled fusion affair that harks back to the glory days of Miles Davis, The Mahavishnu Orchestra, Nucleus, and Larry Coryell's Electric House, yet has the more recent stamp of such ECM luminaries as Terje Rypdal and Bill Frisell. ... "Prayer to the Sun/The Fashion Police"...contains Russell's most savage playing on the album, backed by the nimble grooves of Husband and Foster. When Russell cranks up the distortion and lays on the effects, he'll give you chill just like McLaughlin and Coryell did in their early years. ...*Goodbye Svengali* is sure to be one of the best jazz releases this year. If you aren't already familiar with the talents of this exceptional guitar player...it's not too late to discover all his has to offer. An album like this doesn't come around too often, folks...dig in and enjoy! 5/5 stars"

—Pete Pardo, **Sea of Tranquility**, Feb. 26, 2006

...Russell is an accomplished stylist with chops to spare, tremendous, chameleonic range and the utmost in taste. His style has bits of the rubbery slippery character as well as atmospheres of Terje Rypdal or David Torn. The long, sinuous tones and drones of "Wailing Wall," for instance, split the difference between Robert Fripp and the aforementioned Rypdal. ... Russell's take on Mingus' famous "Goodbye Porkpie Hat" is rather similar to that of Jeff Beck... When he picks up an acoustic guitar, one hears elements of Ralph Towner and even Pat Metheny. Indeed, the whole album has a kind of ECM-label vibe and sonority. ... Russell can tear it up with the best of them when he wants....Solid Jackson! Total rating: 12"

—Dean Suzuki, **Progression**, Summer/Fall 2006 #50

"The opening track "Everywhere" is certainly one of Russell's finest compositions. It closely mimics the sound of Miles Davis' *Fille de Kilimanjaro*, ...the major but unaccredited (and thus the last) joint venture for Davis and Evans. ... Russell's tribute is quite good. ...The title track, "Goodbye Svengali" is another Russell original. It features Evans' son, Miles Evans...who plays in a...style reminiscent of Nils Petter Molvaer. ... Before listening to *Goodbye Svengali*, I knew very little about Ray Russell. But as an unashamed Gil Evans freak, I was intrigued by the many direct and indirect connections. ... Recommended for die-hard Gil Evans collectors, fusion fans, and anyone interested in prodigious electric guitar. Rating: 3 stars."

—David Seymour, **Jazz Review**, 1/15/2006

Those who eulogize Ray Russell for his brief burst of free jazz/rock energy in the 1970s do a disservice to a lengthy, varied career. ...on *Goodbye Svengali*... you can still hear trace elements of that fiery early playing in the lightening-speed runs on "Everywhere" and the slightly burnt, tart distorted guitar sound Russell favours. The album is split between electric conceptions that waver between the right and wrong sides of fusion, slightly wet acoustic guitar reflections and drills for e-bow and massed delay accumulation...nice...to hear him back in action."

—Jon Dale, **Signal to Noise**

"*Goodbye Svengali*, is a valediction to the late Evans...that places the emphasis firmly on fusion... ..Russell...he's been around just as long as the great Mahavishnu, ploughing his own furrow as a highly respected free jazz and fusion pioneer ...on the evidence of this new CD, not only has he got the chops, he's also an intelligent and adventurous composer. ... The title track is undoubtedly the most interesting piece: an atmospheric suite that pays tribute to Evan's epochal work on *Sketches of Spain*... Elsewhere, Russell is decidedly less contemplative – preferring instead to provide scorching, balls-to-the-floor jazz-rock... ..just in case you had any doubts as to where Russell's passions really lie, he ends the set with a live bonus track of absolutely preposterous prog-metal-fusion, "Blaize", propelled by white-hot fretwork and Anthony Jackson's galloping contrabass. ...This is jazz-rock-fusion that you wouldn't introduce to your wife and Ray Russell likes it that way."

—Daniel Spicer, **One Final Note**, May 15, 2006

"August 2006 Albums of the Month: Jazz/Instrumental: Ray Russell – *Goodbye Svengali's* right up there with the greatest jazz concept albums. "

—Phil Jackson, **Paradox One**, Aug. 2006

"I first encountered Ray Russell...when I heard...the title track of this album, and it blew me away with its trumpet intro; dark, cool, atmospheric feel; and guitar playing that pierced the silence like a fireball at night. The album has some spooky fusion moments; it sounds experimental at times. Even on quiet tracks...the sound of Russell's lone guitar, with its otherworldly harmonics and echoing, is sad and majestic at the same time. ...If you're expecting straight-ahead jazz, look elsewhere. Russell's guitar can be delicate or skillfully ferocious, making it sometimes indistinguishable from...major rock virtuosos like Jeff Beck. The CD's sound is first-rate as well."

—Triniman, **Blog Critics**, March 6, 2006