



Bio information: **RAOUL BJÖRKENHEIM / ECSTASY**

Title: **DOORS OF PERCEPTION** (Cuneiform Rune 443) Format: CD / DIGITAL

Cuneiform Promotion Dept: (301) 589-8894 / Fax (301) 589-1819

Press and world radio: joyce@cuneiformrecords.com | North American and world radio: radio@cuneiformrecords.com
www.cuneiformrecords.com

FILE UNDER: **JAZZ / IMPROV**

**Nordic jazz explorers Raoul Björkenheim and eCsTaSy open the Doors to New Sonic Vistas with
Doors of Perception,
kaleidoscopically inventive & perceptive improvisation that reveals the quartet at its hottest,
unleashing “what Ecstasy sounds like”**

In the mansion that is guitarist **Raoul Björkenheim**'s music there are many rooms, and the Finnish-American guitar explorer opens up a particularly vivid and volatile new portal with *Doors of Perception*, his third **Cuneiform** release with his quartet **eCsTaSy**. Slated for release on October 6, 2017, the album captures an extraordinary working ensemble stretching into transfixing new spaces, settings defined as much by texture, vibe and sinuous melodic lines as by rhythmic and harmonic structures.

Featuring the innovative drummer **Markku Ounaskari**, Björkenheim's longtime partner in sonic exploration, the young and dauntingly prolific saxophonist **Pauli Lyytinen** and bassist **Jori Huhtala**, eCsTaSy continues to expand its sonic palette. Over the course of six years the musicians have forged a riveting communion. Capaciously inventive, rigorously gutsy and unapologetically Nordic, the music flows from the mystic Finnish landscape and the hothouse **Helsinki** music scene that gave birth to the band.

“The band has really developed during the last few years, getting to a point that I had hoped we would reach,” Björkenheim says. “We went into the studio with some sketches, but most of the music was created spontaneously, and you get a sense of this ongoing conversation. We couldn't have done this five years ago. We didn't have this kind of trust yet.”

One sure sign of the quartet's deep connection is the way they distill ideas. Sequenced as a stream of consciousness train of impressions, *Doors of Perception* features 10 tracks that all clock in under five minutes. Rather than exploring extended forms or expansive soundscapes, the music is instead marked by pithy statements and compressed drama. Which isn't to say *Doors of Perception* lacks grandeur. The album opens with “**Ides of March**,” an ominous, portentously churning piece that breaks like a thunderstorm, only to clear with a thumping bass passage and a thick, ringing guitar chord. “**Buzz**,” the album's briefest piece, is a jittery journey that seems to pass through a multitude of stations, driven by Ounaskari's spidery cymbal work.

Maybe the group was heading to the beach, as the wary but persistently spacious “**Surf Bird**,” follows, featuring Lyytinen's lilting East-meets-West wood flute. The album's longest track, “**Elemental**” is also the most pleasingly consonant, a snaky sojourn that keys on Lyytinen's keening soprano sax and Björkenheim's meaty strumming. With its blustery bass sax and soaring guitar line, “**Talkin' to Me?**” is appropriately pugnacious, while the title track proceeds like an invitation to an enigmatic subterranean realm. The album closes with “**Ecstasy Dance**,” a righteous blast of joy that whirls off to the horizon, suggesting yet another door well worth entering.

While Björkenheim is no stranger to long musical structures, he was after a different kind of narrative arc on *Doors of Perception*. Much like each piece is a finely calibrated aural micro-cosmos, the album proceeds from track to track with its own internal logic. “In a way it is countercultural,” Björkenheim says. “It's an invitation to enter a world that might be disorienting. I don't hear a walking bass, is this jazz? It might be a little bit of a challenge, but it's also an invitation.”

With *Doors of Perception*, **Björkenheim** and **eCsTaSy** avoid predictable and boring routines to offer the listeners something all too rare in most jazz these days. The *Doors of Perception* invites listeners to join eCsTaSy's musical trip, a journey filled with excitement and joyous revelations that spark emotions and expand all ears.

Doors of Perception is the third release by Raoul Björkenheim's Ecstasy, all of which were released by Cuneiform. The first album, the self-titled *eCsTaSy*, came out in 2014. eCsTaSy's second album, *Out of the Blue*, was released in 2015. Both previous eCsTaSy albums were nominated for the **Emma** Prize for Best Jazz Recording in Finland, which is the Finnish version of the Grammy.

As those who've seen him in his many ensembles can testify, guitarist Björkenheim is an astounding live performer, and his band

eCsTaSy is positively electrifying live. Active on the international jazz festival circuit, Ecstasy recently played at **Jazzahead** in Bremen in April 2017. In support of the release of *Doors of Perception*, Ecstasy will perform several concerts in Finland in 2017. Björkenheim plans to tour Ecstasy internationally in 2018, as well as to do several festival performances.

For more information on Raoul Björkenheim / eCsTaSy:

www.raoulbjorkenheimecstasy.net - www.raoulbjorkenheim.com - www.cuneiformrecords.com

PROMOTIONAL PHOTO

Digital [High-Resolution] images are available on the *Raoul Björkenheim / eCsTaSy* page @ www.cuneiformrecords.com



BIO INFORMATION: RAOUL BJÖRKENHEIM & ECSTASY

Raoul Björkenheim

Born in Los Angeles in 1956 to Finnish parents, Björkenheim spent the first 15 years of his life in California and New York surrounded by artists (his mother is Finnish actress and singer **Taina Elg**). In the early 1970s, he moved to Finland, where he came into the orbit of the great Finnish jazz drummer **Edward Vesala**, who introduced him to his rigorous improvisational ethic. By the early 1980s, Björkenheim became a key member of Vesala's pool of players, performing on three of the drummer's albums including the classic 1987 ECM session *Lumi* by the sprawling ensemble **Sound And Fury**.

"Vesala was a strong influence when I was starting out as a jazz musician in the 80s," Björkenheim says. "His recording *Tryptikon* for ECM with **Jan Garbarek** and **Arild Andersen** is one of my talismans to this day. That record proposes a music influenced by the free jazz of **Ornette** and **Ayler**, but tempered by a gorgeous Nordic sensibility and an ear for free tonality, combined with an extended use of dynamics."

By the end of the 1980s, Björkenheim was ready to strike out on his own, and he made his first major contribution as a bandleader with **Krakatau**. The group released two recordings in Finland; in 1996, Cuneiform reissued one of them, 1988's *Ritual*, thus beginning its longstanding collaboration with the guitarist. After Björkenheim reformed Krakatau with all new personnel, the group gained international acclaim in the early 1990s with two albums on ECM. Krakatau continues to make music, often joining forces with four-piece **West African** percussion ensemble **Senegal Drums** as the 8-piece **Krakatau & Senegal Drums**, whose most recent festival gig "had people dancing in the aisles, it's very joyous music," recalls Björkenheim.

In 2001, Björkenheim moved to New York City. On September 18 - exactly a week after 9/11 - he released an astounding and ambitious album called *Apocalypso* on Cuneiform. A solo studio album, *Apocalypso* featured Björkenheim playing all of the 42 parts he originally composed for 42 guitarists at the 1994 **Helsinki Juhlaviikot Festival**. *All About Jazz* noted that "*Apocalypso* manages to be both brilliant and apocalyptic at the same time. It stands among Björkenheim's best work... pure, undiluted Björkenheim... truly glorious in its relentless blackness."

Björkenheim returned to Finland in 2008, where he resides today. He continues working with like-minded visionary musicians on both continents, collaborating with Finnish musicians (**UMO Orchestra**, **Kalle Kalima** and **Markus Holkko**) while also maintaining productive contacts with New York free jazz stalwarts **William Parker** and **Hamid Drake**, **Kalabalik** with **Gerald Cleaver** and **Anders Nilsson**, and genre-smashing **Bill Laswell**. In 2011, Cuneiform released the debut self-titled album by **Blixt**, featuring the jaw-dropping trans-continental power trio of Björkenheim, bassist **Laswell** and Swedish drummer **Morgan Ägren**.

In Finland, Björkenheim has forged a creatively rewarding relationship with the noted Finnish director **Taru Mäkelä**, writing scores for a series of her films, including the 2011 hit *Varasto (Warehouse)* and a sequel to the dark, workplace comedy *Varasto 2 (Warehouse 2)*, to be released in 2018. In addition, Björkenheim is currently writing a book on guitar improvisation. "The book," says Björkenheim, "will be purposefully aimed at ALL guitarists who want to learn their way around their instruments through improvising, so jazz, classical, folk and rock guitarists will find a wealth of ideas to work on."

Regarding his recording and performing ensembles, Björkenheim says "I'm mainly focused on **eCsTaSy** and **Triad**. Instead of putting out 10 records a year, these days I prefer something that's more focused and complete." **Triad**, Björkenheim's power trio with double bassist **Ville Rauhala** and drummer **Ilmari Heikinheimo**, released its critically hailed debut album *Beyond (Wayside)* in 2017. But

his primary creative outlet for the past six years has been **eCsTaSy**, an astounding, empathetic quartet whose first two recordings on Cuneiform (2014's *Ecstasy* and 2015's *Out of the Blue*) were nominated for an **Emma**, the Finnish equivalent of the Grammy.

Founded by Björkenheim in 2001, Ecstasy includes drummer and long-time Björkenheim collaborator **Markku Ounaskari**, and saxophonist **Pauli Lyytinen** and bassist **Jori Huhtala**, whom **Björkenheim** met during his teaching duties at the **Sibelius Academy**.

Markku Ounaskari

A veteran of some of the most memorable Finnish groups of the past two decades, **Markku Ounaskari** gained new visibility recording for ECM, including his first solo album, 2010's *Kuára*. A confederate of international jazz stars like Polish trumpeter **Tomasz Stanko**, French guitarist **Marc Ducret**, alto sax legend **Lee Konitz**, and the late great Canadian trumpeter **Kenny Wheeler**, Ounaskari has played with all virtually almost all the major Finnish jazz figures. In 2014 he was given the **Yrjö prize**, the most prestigious jazz award and the biggest acknowledgement that a jazz musician can receive for his or her work in Finland. "Markku is a lyrical player who has the capacity for high-energy explosions as well," Björkenheim says, "so with him in the crew we're aiming for that wide dynamic/emotional range."

Pauli Lyytinen

Saxophonist **Pauli Lyytinen**, 34, is part of the band's youth wave, a prolific recording artist who leads or co-leads a diverse array of ensembles, including **Elifantree**, **Magnetia Orkesteri**, **Equally Stupid**, **Pauli Lyytinen Machinery**, **Kauhukakara**, **Laponia Improvisations Experiment**, and **Skalle & Sharon**. "He's a musician and composer with an obsession for tone color and experimental techniques, creating a sensation with his fluency on the Bb family of saxophones, from bass to soprano," Björkenheim says. "In music ranging from hardcore free to experimental pop, Lyytinen has been inventing new roles for his instrument, often limiting himself to the role of accompanist. In this quartet, he gets a chance to spread his improvisatory wings."

Jori Huhtala

At 33, bassist **Jori Huhtala** is the youngest member of the band, though he's already firmly established on the international scene through his work with heavyweights like **David Liebman**, **Tim Hagans**, **Jukkis Uotila** and **Tim Ries**. At home he's in constant demand as a sideman with top Finnish improvisers such as **Verner Pohjola**, **Eero Koivistoinen**, **Kari Ikonen**, and **Jari Perkiömäki**, and in the ensembles **Big Blue**, **Kvalda**, and **Jussi Fredriksson Jazz Wars**. For Björkenheim, his powerful bandstand presence "echoes of **Miroslav Vitous** and other past masters."

Cuneiform asked Raoul Björkenheim to talk about *Doors of Perception*. Here's what he said:

The name of our album is "Doors of Perception", readily bringing to mind the book by Aldous Huxley describing his ecstatic experiences with mescaline, and also part of a poem called "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" by William Blake. I named it that because of the cover photograph, which I took while walking in Soho NYC last June. It seemed to me to evoke the psychedelic spirit of our album, in which the listener really has to let go and just dive in!

But the cover also has a subtle political message. The USA's political climate is hitting unprecedented lows, and unbelievably 40% of the population still think that Trump is doing a good job (WTF??), so everything feels very absurd, like there's little hope in sight. When I saw this doorway in Soho, I couldn't resist the image, which seemed to me to be as fragmented as society is now, and of course the dig at Trump was waaay too polite, but it felt very appropriate, especially as the poster is in Spanish.

When we were planning this album, I had the ambition to write tight charts. But my experience led me to decide that the free quality I'm looking for thrives better in an improvised setting, so I abandoned the chart idea and instead trusted the band to listen and improvise, based on several ideas for each piece.

Compared to Ecstasy's previous album, Doors of Perception is a freer, rawer proposal with less predetermined forms, so the band has a chance to demonstrate trust in ourselves and in each other. After six years of working together, I feel that this album sounds more mature and together, though the hallmarks of our playing will surely be recognizable.

The listener might initially become disoriented by the raw sound we deliver here, but given that "jazz" records have often become so predictable, I hope that this music will feel fresh and daring once the musical environment becomes more familiar. We take quite a lot of risks that most jazz musicians would leave alone, allowing ourselves to ride the waves as they come, but I myself have great respect for musicians that do take those risks.

*I think that **Doors of Perception** reveals the band at it's hottest, almost like a live recording, and therefore it gives a true picture of what Ecstasy sounds like.*

- Raoul Björkenheim, August 2017

WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT

RAOUL BJÖRKENHEIM/ECSTASY *OUT OF THE BLUE* CUNEIFORM 2015

“There is a side to modern jazz where...cross-fertilization, is the norm...jazz fusion, prog rock, postmodern material...and more commingle. **Guitarists such as Nels Cline, Bill Frisell and Sonny Sharrock... Finland’s Raoul Bjorkenheim is another guitarist who tackles disparate, but somehow connected, improvisational ground.** ...*Out of the Blue*... Several tracks showcase Bjorkenheim’s electric guitar, and are paced with tinges of rock and toughened jazz. Opener “Heads & Tales”... Bjorkenheim’s amplified tone has more in common with Jeff Beck than, say, Wes Montgomery.... Mainstream and unconventional jazz meet headlong on...“Roller Coaster,” ...a 21st-century twist on Carl Stalling’s cartoon music.

A Nordic sensibility is silhouetted during “A Fly in the House of Love,” which has a meditative soundscape. Lyytinen generates a Jan Garbarek feeling on the oboe-like zurna ... while Huhtala switches to arco bass ...and Bjorkenheim and Ounaskari create a gamelan-like garnishing... via prepared guitar ...“Zebra Dreams,” ... has an African undercoating. ... ***Out of the Blue* is unambiguously a Cuneiform Records album. Fans of the label will have an idea of the eclecticism and adventurism which saturates *Out of the Blue*. This is material which is engaging, bristly, combines old and new, and is unpredictable. 4-stars”**

- Doug Simpson, *Audiophile Audition*, www.audaud.com

“Finland based virtuoso guitarist returns with excellent world music infused new set.

Born in the US but with strong Finnish roots..virtuoso guitarist Raoul Björkenheim has shuttled between the two countries physically and musically, absorbing further influences from places as diverse as Turkey and southern Africa en route. ...he teams up...under the Ecstasy moniker with Finns Pauli Lyytinen (bass, tenor and soprano saxophones plus Turkish mey), youthful bassist Jori Huhtala and celebrated drummer Markku Ounaskari. **Their sound is marked by virtuoso guitar licks, rapidly shifting tempi and a frequent sense of nervy tension...on Uptown with its Hendrix-meets-Cream wailing bluesy guitar, driving bass and snarling sax.**

There's versatility too.... **The slow Latino inflections of Heads And Tails' extended guitar play hints at Al Di Meola,...while Quintrille oozes cool Coltrane swing as Bjorkenheim's guitar melds with the Eastern wind sound of the mey.** An Eastern influence also marks A Fly In The House Of Love...

...sense of control...laces most of the album...

...the 10-minute closing track **Zebra Dreams – an admirable blend of mid-tempo township jive guitar that sweetly morphs into something jazzier that nods to Pat Metheny, with Nordic sax filtering at various points into the groove.”**

-Norman Miller, *Bearded*, <http://www.beardedmagazine.com>

“...on-the-edge and indefinable... Finnish guitarist Raoul Björkenheim’s eCsTaSy. While the quartet, fueled by the muscular bashing of drummer Markku Onuskari, explodes with blowtorch intensity on the free-jazz opener, “Heads & Tales,” they settle into the infectiously funky second-line groover “Quintrille” with harmonic chemistry. ... The four collectively explore on the free-jazz freakout “Roller Coaster,” recalling some of Ornette Coleman’s experiments with his electric Prime Time band, and the album closes with the mesmerizing African-flavored “Zebra Dreams,” which has Björkenheim’s prepared guitar sounding like an ancient mbira or thumb piano. [Rating: 3.5 stars]

- Bill Milkowski, *Downbeat*, May 2016

“...Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman...that music was great was because the musicians had something original to say, or an original way of saying what they meant. To listen to current players repeating the ideas of the innovators just seems pointless... I’d much rather hear someone trying something new. Case in point: Raoul Björkenheim and his band Ecstasy. **I love their self-titled debut from 2014, and this new effort is right up there with it in quality without rehashing the same stuff. ...*Out of the Blue* is one of my favorite new releases in jazz this year, consistently interesting and never predictable.”**

- Jon Davis, *Exposé*, www.expose.org

“Guitarist Raoul Bjorkenheim's tone is pretty identifiable. It's laser pointed but fuzzy, tough but brittle, and his group Ecstasy brings out the best of his playing. ...a close connection with Bjorkenheim's earlier...group Krakatau. Like with that ensemble, Bjorkenheim is working with a quartet that features a range of woodwinds and percussion instruments... With Ecstasy, **we hear the intervening years of working with...Scorch and with Blixt honing the focus and ferocity of his playing.** ...Like...Krakatau, there are moments here where the textures and rhythms of world music shine through...

Bjorkenheim's latest delivers on a great jazz rock filled vision. Like the surreal cover...the guitarist brings and element of surprise...his juxtaposing of rock, jazz, and free elements. **4.5/5 stars”** - Paul Acquaro, *The Free Jazz Collective*, December 7, 2015

“Top Records of 2015... The past year was a banner one for modern guitar. ... Raoul Björkenheim *Out of the Blue* [Cuneiform] Raoul made the list last year and this year’s release is equally stellar.” - Michael Ross, *Guitar Moderne*, www.guitarmoderne.com

“*Out of the Blue*...album from Finland’s Raoul Björkenheim eCsTaSy...vast, wide open spaces peopled only by the footprints of sparse guitars. Wholly instrumental and largely improvised, it is nevertheless so tightly bound that structure is seldom far away, even when Björkenheim’s guitar is being tied down with alligator clips (“A Fly in the House of Love”), and the textures are less redolent of dark Nordic nights than they are the cluttered mysticism of lost Asian ritual.”

- Dave Thompson, “Cuneiform Records - Thirty-plus Years of Essential Listening”, May 5, 2016, *Goldmine*, www.goldminemag.com

“Deadpan surrealism graces the cover of *Out of the Blue*... a lean, shirtless man is seen on horseback ... inside a vintage Polish kitchen. ... the image beguiles on its own terms... also applies to the musical contents within. **The electric-guitar-led quartet moves inside and out, from free jazz to Finnish blues to Scofield-like angularity to many other points between idiomatic poles. And somehow, they make poetic sense of it all.** Although Björkenheim establishes himself as the leading voice –in cohesive cahoot with saxophonist Pauli Lyytinen, acoustic bassist Jori Huhtala and notably intuitive drummer Markku Ounaskari - ***Out of the Blue* is a whole made of integral parts. A narrative logic pervades the enigmatically charming album**, which begins with... mostly improvised “Heads and Tales,”... The song cycle concludes seven tracks later with the muted percussive hypnosis of the west African-influenced “Zebra Dreams.” ... **Björkenheim and company hint at jazz-world references – the Scofield-like slink of “Quintrille,” the skittering Ornette Coleman-inspired melody of “Roller Coaster” – and weave them into wild flights of fancy. But something distinctive and self-defining is at the core, like a horse in the kitchen.”** - Josef Woodard, *Jazziz*, Spring 2016

“Ever since Edward Vesala’s 1987 release *Lumi*, the utterly distinctive guitar of Raoul Björkenheim has been ever present in my life. ... 2014’s eCsTaSy (Cuneiform) signalled a return to the... more structured improvisational forms of Krakatau... [Out of the Blue] opens with the slowly rising *Heads & Tails*; a languid melody... Think of Garbarek’s Tryptikon or Afric Pepperbird.... *Quintrille*, by contrast, is the kind of off-kilter bar-room boogie that Krakatau often included in their repertoire... before the deeply meditative ballad *A Fly In The House Of Love*. Using alligator clips to “prepare” his guitar, he creates an almost Balinese effect, heightening the album’s abiding sense of mysticism. *Uptown* is pure Mingus and showcases Björkenheim’s take on Hendrix, *You Never Know* provides a wistful and almost cinematic interlude, Huhtala’s *OLJ* rides a heavy Krautrock beat, *Roller Coaster* doffs a cap to Ornette, and the closing soundscape *Zebra Dreams* slowly reveals a deep pool of reverie. **Björkenheim’s idiosyncratic track sequencing only accentuates the album’s impact... Harking back to the early roots of today’s European free-jazz, Out Of The Blue is a work of great profundity. 4 stars”** - Fred Grand, *Jazz Journal*, Feb 2017

“Bursting out of the Helsinki avant-jazz scene, the guitarist Björkenheim and his band eCsTaSy has Pauli Lyytinen’s Brötzmann-like feral tenor horn to help crank up the decibels to 11.” - Selwyn Harris, *Jazzwise*, October 2016

“Raoul Björkenheim’s guitar-playing always seems informed by a composer’s instincts and sensibilities... *Out of the Blue*... combines a sense of old-fashioned wonder with an aggressive modernism... certain pieces emerge as almost cinematically graphic. ... The raw emotion of Heads and Tales and the apprehension... in the House of Love... is immediate and powerful. ... a psychological drama of immense import unfolds... **The emotional nakedness and unnerving attention to detail recall the seminal recordings of the Jimi Hendrix Experience.** ... **Björkenheim and eCsTaSy bring orientation and direction without sacrificing sensuality or mystical aura.** ... an almost uncanny variety of touch, tone production and judicious glissandos and bending of notes. **The result is a recording that is audaciously original, yet recalls the contemporaneous keening of voices in Northern Europe.** ... **discs warranting the highest praise are those that persuasively introduce new music, that chart new interpretative territory for a work or that demonstrate something fresh and heretofore unrecognised in music long familiar. ... Björkenheim’s and eCsTaSy’s contribution in this release could scarcely be more generous.”** - Raul da Gama, *JazzdaGama*, January 31, 2016, jazzdagama.com

“Critics have heaped lavish praise on guitarist Raoul Björkenheim’s curious brand of improvised jazz, and understandably so, even if commonly drawn parallels (Ayler, Coleman, Coltrane, Mahavishnu, Hendrix, Fela, et al.) only serve to underscore the audacious yet ultimately elusive nature of his music. *Out of the Blue*... will help burnish the band’s growing reputation for creative synthesis and spontaneity.... Björkenheim... with eCsTaSy’s renowned drummer Markku Ounaskari, bassist Jori Huhtala and saxophonist Pauli Lyytinen... **exploring a multidimensional sound that embraces expansive soundscapes, Nordic/noirish vignettes and jarringly kinetic interludes... nothing is more engaging than “Quintrille,”... sleek harmonies, bluesy phrasing, impassioned soprano sax and ebullient rhythms, or as profoundly Zen as “A Fly in the House of Love,”... resonating with exotic tones and colors. The Hendrix connection comes into sharp focus on “Uptown,” ... *Out of the Blue*... offers new discoveries and fresh perspectives with each spin.”** - Mike Joyce, *Jazz Times*, January 14, 2016

“...Raoul Björkenheim and his eCsTaSy quartet has delivered a wonderful and refreshing improvisation-based album with *Out of the Blue*. ... His playing on this album ranges from exotic to nordic to Hendrix. ... **Each track has a very distinct texture and story to tell.** ... The group... embraces their Finnish roots with the distinctly Nordic sounding track, “Roller Coaster.” Other tracks like “Uptown” and “Quintrille” feature Björkenheim’s distinct blues and Hendrix influenced improvisation style. **The improvisational communication on *Out of the Blue* is top-notch. ... Raoul Björkenheim and the eCsTaSy quartet seamlessly blend “inside” and “outside” playing in *Out of the Blue* to create an experimental jazz album for the likes of even the more conservative jazz listener.”** - Alex Frank, *KJHK*, February 7, 2016, www.kjhk.org

“... **modern jazz that looks to mix melodic song forms with longer collectively improvised tracks.** ... “Quintrille” with the music sounding fast paced and knotty... Björkenheim’s effects laden guitar then takes center stage for a short wild solo, before everyone returns together under some superb saxophone playing. “Uptown” is hot right off the bat... There is a very interesting rhythm from Ounaskari on “OLJ”... making the music ominous and foreboding. Big slabs of electric guitar, building edifices of noise and then suddenly... silence. ... **The band works very well together, moving through sub-genres of jazz as a cohesive unit. ... and**

Björkenheim's shows his chops in areas from progressive rock to abstract improvisation. And you can't beat that album cover."
 - Tim Niland, *Music and More*, October 20, 2015

"THE BEST OF THE REST... Raoul Björkenheim / eCsTaSy – *Out of the Blue*: Visceral, vivid and uncompromising,... Raoul Björkenheim and his eCsTaSy band continue to conjure up a new set of fresh ideas for each track, and leverage an ample supply of intuition and musicianship to make it work right." - S. Victor Aaron, "S. Victor Aaron's Best Of 2015 (Part 3 of 4, Avant Garde + Experimental)", *Something Else!*, January 2, 2016

"Honorable Mentions–New Releases ... Raoul Björkenheim eCsTaSy – *Out of the Blue* (Cuneiform)"
 - "Best of 2015," *The New York City Jazz Record*

"...*Out of the Blue*...includes eight tracks of majestic jazz with the attitude of rock, clearly influenced by some of the greats of the '60s & '70s. At times you'll hear bits of Pangaea era Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Jimi Hendrix, Terje Rypdal, and the Tony Williams Lifetime, with Björkenheim's screaming, often times fuzz soaked licks stampeding over nimble jazz rhythms and wild sax explorations from Lyytinen...the lengthy "Heads & Tales"...seems to take the early '70s Miles Davis influence of deep rhythms and acrobatic guitar & sax solos, borrowing as much from rock and jazz as it does blues. ... "Uptown" is *Out of the Blue*'s clear jazz-rocker, a vibrant, catchy number fueled by scorching guitar & sax solos, and the menacing "OLJ" sees metallic guitar chords eventually give way to squonking sax and blazing lead guitar that recalls John McLaughlin, Robert Fripp, and Terje Rypdal. ...impressive jazz-rock, as eCsTaSy show they can go full steam ahead into either jazz or rock, or settle nicely somewhere in between. Wonderful ensemble playing, killer guitar work, stunning sax...sure not to miss this one. 4/5 Stars"
 - Pete Pardo, *Sea of Tranquility*, December 27, 2015, www.seaoftranquility.org

"...Raoul Björkenheim's eCsTaSy quartet has been testing the limits of what's possible when experimental rock and free-form jazz are put into a supercollider. ...this band showed cohesion and telepathy rare in a band where volatility reigns supreme.

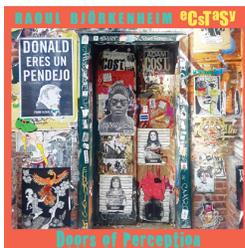
... "A Fly In The House Of Love" paints a desolate soundscape, creating a mysticism based heavily on timbres as Lyytinen moans away on a zurna and Huhtala's low, bowed bass resembles a baritone sax.

For the funky piece "Uptown," Björkenheim releases caustic shards of blues-based guitar that transport right back to his work with the Scorch Trio. ... "OLJ", an imposing jungle rhythm mated with death metal declarations...

Visceral, vivid and uncompromising, *Out of the Blue* picks up where *eCsTaSy* left off. ...eCsTaSy band continue to conjure up a new set of fresh ideas for each track, and leverage an ample supply of intuition and musicianship to make it work right."

- S. Victor Aaron, *Something Else!*, December 23, 2015, www.somethingelsereviews.com

RAOUL BJÖRKENHEIM RELATED RECORDINGS ON CUNEIFORM RECORDS



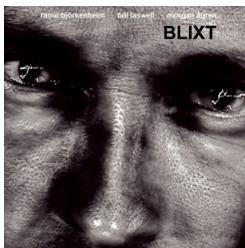
Raoul Björkenheim / eCsTaSy
Doors of Perception
 [2017, Rune 443]



Raoul Björkenheim / eCsTaSy
Out of the Blue
 [2015, Rune 413]



Raoul Björkenheim / eCsTaSy
eCsTaSy
 [2014, Rune 373]



Bill Laswell, Raoul Björkenheim,
 Morgan Agren: *Blixt*
 [2011, Rune 335]



Raoul Björkenheim
Apocalypse
 [2001, Rune 156]



Raoul Björkenheim / Krakatau
Ritual
 [1996, Rune 86]