

CRITIQUE

New Releases by Phil Stewart, Henry Conerway, Jeff Berlin, Rudy Royston and more.

Groove and pocket are something drummers discuss often. It's something where you know it when you hear it.



Jeff Berlin Random Misfires

The veteran Boston-area drummer turns personal challenges into art.

After suffering a series of strokes in 2015, the Vermont-based Bow Thayer drummer was forced to modify his professional and personal habits. In some instances, the bite-sized drum-driven compositions on *Random Misfires* evolved directly from therapeutic exercises Berlin performed to regain his motor skills, which in turn helped him develop various innovative sticking patterns applied in these pieces. With the assistance of musical friends, woodwind player Dana Colley (Morphine) and guitarist Pete Weiss, a rehabilitated Berlin stokes twenty-one genre-defying, visually evocative drumscales, such as the lovably lumbering “Baby Elephants,” bewildering “Pagan Mantis” in 7/8, and rhythmically mangled “Winged Man,” highlighting the endearing vulnerability of their creator. “Random misfires”? Here’s proof that a record’s title doesn’t always tell the whole story. (jeffberlin.bandcamp.com) Available from Amazon. **Will Romano**

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