

JOSEPH SHABASON AYTCHE

ABOUT THIS RECORD

In 2017, with so-called Nu-Jazz in full view, saxophonist Joseph Shabason is solely pulling the thread left hanging by the marriage of minimalism and jazz in the previous century. His debut LP, *Aytche*, reveals this cross-pollination to be as fertile and captivating as ever, fitting as well-- or better-- into this decade as any other. Shabason builds a bridge off of the precipice his forbears established, skirting jazz, ambient, and even new age with the same deliberate genre-ambiguity that made their work so interesting.

Aytche, however, is not a stoic march toward technological frontiers, but a document of exploration both inward and outward. Every step taken in sound-design mirrors a stride in emotionality, as Shabason employs a variety of effect pedals to coax rich moody textures from his instrument. He explains, "So much sax music is about chops, and being able to solo really fast. I feel like robbing the sax of the ability to shred by effecting it and turning it into a dense chordal instrument really helps the instrument become something that it's not usually known for." *Aytche* deals with themes of degenerative illness and assisted suicide with eloquence that instrumental music rarely achieves regarding any subject, much less such difficult ones.

Shabason's compositions are steeped in a deteriorative quality that seems to melt and glide between peace and confusion, tragedy and resolve, like calm memories and end-of-life fears interrupting each other moment by moment. Opening track "Looking Forward to Something, Dude" introduces the recurrent motif of the album; a warm, downward shifting chorus of effected horns that is at once healing and heartrending, creating a unnameable mood all its own. Flits of dissonant woodwinds punctuate the stillness like the impulse of anxiety arising in deep thought, giving us a reason to catch our breath in a moment of complacency. The title track and its successor "Neil McCauley" urge the procession forward with understated relentlessness before the album's opening horn motif re-emerges under a layer of serrated distortion on the aptly named "Smokestack."

Further into the experience is "Westmeath" a piece that approaches *Aytche*'s subject of inspiration head-on. Here, the album's only verbalization appears in the form of an interview with a man discussing his father's trauma and eventual suicide after surviving the holocaust. Though we only hear a few obscured words and phrases from the interview, the impact is powerful. For Shabason, whose grandparents survived the holocaust themselves, this selection is anything but frivolous.

Shabason intended for this album to be heard with Eno's "as ignorable as it is interesting" philosophy, but the mood here is far too singular to exist as background. As with so much of the best contemplative music, there is therapy in *Aytche*, but the flies in the ointment make the moments of peace all the more descriptive and potent by contrast.



TRACK LIST

01 Looking Forward To Something, Dude	4:02
02 Aytche	3:48
03 Neil McCauley	5:15
04 Smokestack	4:12
05 Tite Cycle	5:20
06 Long Swim	4:55
07 Westmeath	4:57
08 Chopping Wood	4:02
09 Belching Smoke	4:14

QUOTES

"I love this music... dream music... constantly trying to emulate water, emulate air."

- DAN BEJAR (DESTROYER)

"I got lost in this chillhouse and almost couldn't find my way out... Highly recommended"

- SANDRO PERRI

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