

California Guitar Trio – Elegy (2020)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)
Sunday, 04 April 2021 14:51 -

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1 *Hallitussilmad* 3:56 2 *Where It Goes, We Go* 3:22 3 *Get Back* 2:34 4 *Gaudela Trilogy Part I: Alva* 3:26 5 *El Aparcero* 1:35 6 *Daydreaming* 4:14 7 *Gaudela Trilogy Part III: Mondego Rio Da Esperança* 4:28 8 *Cavatina* 3:26 9 *Diamond Head* 1:53 10 *Droning Circulation* 5:28 11 *Shining Road* 3:21 12 *Gaudela Trilogy Part II: Ribeira De Gouveia* 3:10 13 *Elegy* 3:22 14 *Hallitussilmad Argo Vals Remix* 3:43 Paul Richards - guitar Bert Lams - guitar Hideyo Moriya - guitar + Special Guests: Davide Rossi - strings performed and arranged on *Cavatina* Tony Levin - upright bass on *Droning* Fabio Mittino - electric guitars on *Shining Road*, *Elegy* and *Hallitussilmad*

Like many of you, our lives have been severely impacted by Covid-19. Many of our family and friends have been directly affected by the virus, and we've suffered devastating losses in both our own communities and our global community. Also, like so many of our fans, our livelihood has been altered - drastically and indefinitely. Because of this situation we had to cancel all of our shows for the foreseeable future. We are currently unable to participate in our favorite part of being working musicians - which is traveling to your local venue to play for you. We want to thank you for supporting our music and coming out to share time with us all these wonderful years.

During the past year, while touring, we recorded our new album ELEGY at Airbnb houses in West Hollywood, Chicago, Bryn Mawr and Montreal. In addition to our own compositions and a few covers, we focused on music written by friends we met during our travels in the past 29 years. The album features special guests Tony Levin, Davide Rossi and Fabio Mittino.

Until we can get back out on the road and see you in person, CGT would like to offer our new album ELEGY via digital download at a price that works for anyone - PAY WHAT YOU WISH.

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We hope you enjoy the new music. And we wish you peace and good health. ---Hideyo, Paul, and Bert, California Guitar Trio

I've been playing the California Guitar Trio on Echoes for 30 years now, about as long as the group has existed. They've performed live many times and been interviewed many times. But they've only had one CD of the Month pick, last year's *In a Landscape* with the Montreal Guitar Trio. Well, now they have a second one, with their beautiful new album, *Elegy*. It's a set of pristinely-crafted instrumentals, with many of the compositions coming from friends who, along with CGT's Paul Richards, Bert Lams and Hideyo Moriya, went through Robert Fripp's Guitar Craft courses in the 1980s and 90s.

CGT have taken those teachings and deployed them across an eclectic range of music that includes covers of Queen and Lynyrd Skynyrd songs, pieces by John Cage and Pink Floyd, along with many original compositions. *Elegy* may be their most coherent and finely-crafted album yet, even though it was recorded in Airbnb living rooms while on tour this past winter. The album features a lot of compositions from friends they met over the years including "Hallitussilmad," written by Estonian composer Argo Vals. It's the kind of track that exemplifies the meticulous sound of CGT, with cycling arpeggios and staccato decrescendos, accented here by a bit of electric guitar sustain from Fabio Mittino, who brings the song to an unusually fiery peak. There's also a more ambient mix of this song at the end of the album.

"Where It Goes, We Go" is written by Argentinian guitarist Alex Anthony Faide and American guitarist Steve Ball, both of whom are Crafty Guitarist alumni. It's another energetic piece, tapping more of a virtuoso folky finger-style guitar sound that evokes Leo Kottke, but also moving into dark, churning grooves.

There is the usual assortment of covers that the band indulges in. For me, CGT covers are a mixed-bag. If it's a song I don't love, they don't make me love it more. That's the case with The Beatles' "Get Back", a fun, but lightweight Paul McCartney tune that they approach with humor and a shouted "Get Back JoJo." If it's a song I do love, however, like Radiohead's "Daydreaming," they make me stand in awe at how they translate it to their acoustic guitars and reinvent it. On Radiohead's 2016 album, *A Moon Shaped Pool*, "Daydreaming" is a drifting,

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lysergic reverie. CGT turn it into a more pastoral meditation.

“Daydreaming” is one of the songs that features the “circulation” technique they learned from Robert Fripp. It entails passing a melody between the three players, one note at a time. They do that overtly in Claude LaFlamme’s “Droning Circulation” and more subtly in other songs like “Daydreaming.” It’s one of the reasons why CGT albums are such great headphone material, something you don’t often consider with acoustic guitar. It’s the best way to hear the interlocked synchrony of their melodies which ping across the stereo spectrum, sending riffs through your head in a lattice symmetry, like watching a dance of stars.

Centering the album is the “Gaudela Trilogy,” a three-part work, each movement composed by a different member of CGT, and scattered across the album in random order. Each part is distinctive. Bert Lams’s “Part I: Alva,” has more of a classical bent, with arpeggiated melodies circling around each other as a subtle, flute-like sustain creates a building tension. Hideyo Moriya’s “Part III: Mondego Rio Esperanca” creates a multi-structured work of cyclical crescendos and a bit of a Flamenco flair. Paul Richards’s “Part II: Ribeira de Gouveia” charges out of the gate with a chase-theme groove, leading to a string of solos and hard-picked rhythms.

The title track of the album, “Elegy,” was written by Collin Landinguin, another Crafty friend who passed away. The album is dedicated to him. It’s a spatial envelopment, with CGT joined by some 24 musicians including guitarists, violinists, and singers, playing interlocking unison lines that ring out in space, along with some wailing, ululating wordless vocals by Beth Fleenor.

After 30-plus years, the three-headed, six-handed guitar monster known as the California Guitar Trio has released one of their best albums. Elegy is a remarkable feat that should not go unmarked, and I’m marking it right here. ---echoes.org

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