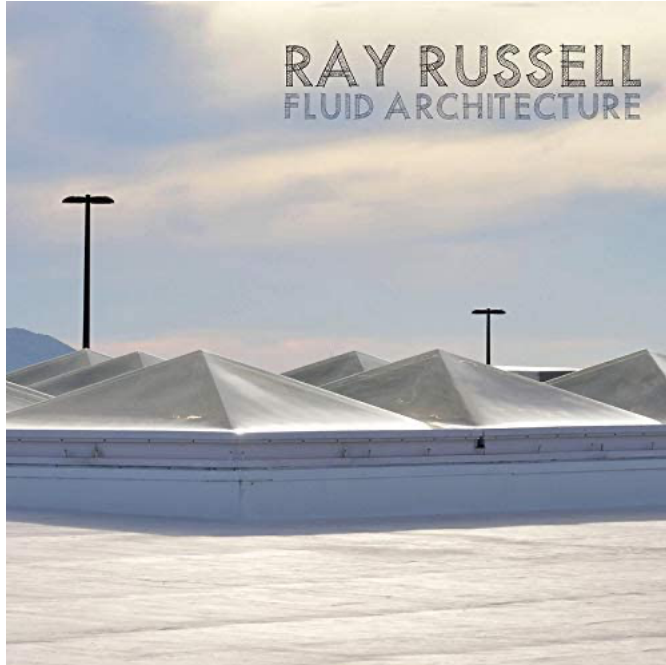


REVIEWS OF 'FLUID ARCHITECTURE'



Sonic structures caper and cavort on guitarist's guitarist Ray Russell's first solo album in seven years.

"Like contemporaries Sonny Sharrock and Terje Rypdal, Russell makes it sound as if the guitar is not enough, as if he's reaching for something wilder, something that can't be contained within the 6-string cage." – *Jim O'Rourke*

"His stabbing, singing notes and psychotic runs up the fretboard have nothing to do with scalar architecture, but rather with viscera and tonal exploration." – *Thom Jurek, AllMusic Guide*

"I believe in the sonic signature. Gil Evans used to say, 'Everyone has a cry. Without it, only notes come out of the instrument.'" – *Ray Russell*

"Less is a bore." – architect *Robert Venturi*

Frank Zappa famously characterised music as sculpted air, a notion Ray Russell parlays into another dimension entirely on *Fluid Architecture*. Russell's new collection of unique sonic structures – his first solo album since 2013's *Now, More Than Ever* – reflects the composer and longtime Fender Strat experimentalist's sonic signature – one distinguished by diversity and combining luscious lyricism, screaming expressionism, and an alien vocabulary of textures and colors – often within the same track. Russell's

guitar can be as comforting as man's best friend or as threatening as colors out of space.

Past, present, and future entwine on opener "Escaping the Six-String Cage." This sinuous and stately, electronically enhanced edifice samples Russell's free-music masterpiece, June 11th 1971: Live at the ICA (reissued on Jim O'Rourke's Mokai label). It's the perfect introduction to the architectonic underpinnings of Russell's sound(s).

Fluid Architecture's arrangements focus on unique configurations featuring collaborators old and new. The first of the album's four extended group combustions, "Turn Right at Ventura," applies a sci-fi spin to echoes of the R&B twang heard during Russell's mid-'60s "James Bond" era with the John Barry Seven. A quintet featuring Russell's former RMS drummer Simon Phillips (of Toto fame and oh-so-much more) cooks and careens during a slightly ominous joy ride down Blue Jay Way's somewhat less groovy neighbor.

"We Go a Short Way Back," "Six In – Six Out," and "A Room Within a Room" display Russell's free-associative compositional strategies amid different groups, all eliciting thrillingly narrative and deeply communicative performances. The first of these is a sort of cosmic shuffle, with Russell navigating at his coolest. "Six In – Six Out" reflects its title, with relatively restrained quartet playing giving way to eerier extremes. "A Room Within a Room" is a first-take-best-take gem featuring Chris Biscoe's soprano sax poking through themes within themes and a cloud of high-octane misterioso. George Baldwin does most of the bottom-end lifting on bass and Chapman stick, with Mo Foster (the M of RMS) replacing him on "A Room Within a Room." Drummers Nic France and Ralph Salmins appear on "We Go a Short Way Back" and "A Room Within a Room," respectively.

"Moon Dog" is a harmonically formal solo, an emotionally resonant electric elegy for a brave stray dog Russell and his wife rescued from Afghanistan. Another elegy, "One for Geoff," offers a short, sweet acoustic tribute to the late keyboardist Geoff Castle, with whom Russell worked for a half-century.

Although you'll hear little of Russell's extensive experience as a library artist and award-winning soundtrack composer in its chambers, Fluid Architecture resonates with Russell's various immersions in R&B, cool jazz, jazz-rock/rock-jazz fusion, and absolute freedom. They're just some of design elements informing a structure that reserves the right to dissolve its boundaries at will. And if you choose to dance to Fluid Architecture, ain't nobody's business if you do.