

Kevin Kastning
Carl Clements
Sándor Szabó

Convergence I



Back in the late 60s I used to go to coffee houses and listen to music performed live or poets reciting their work. **Kevin Kastning, Carl Clements, and Sándor Szabó's** new album **Convergence I** is like that experience. Their mix is a combination of avant-garde, jazz, and contemporary elements that are woven tightly together. The results are an aural tapestry that delights the ear. Each song is like an experience all its own, but it's a comfortable one. It generates its own atmosphere and you want to breathe deeply. Kevin Kastning is the master of the 30-string Contra-Alto guitar, and incredible instrument that looks like a pair of wings. Clements plays various flutes, bansuri and others, and Szabó plays a 16-string classical guitar. Nothing ordinary here. **Convergence I** is where concepts, timing, and tunings artfully merge to create an album of surprising vividness and complexity. Especially, the complexity angle. No minimalism here. Not only do the artists put a great deal of thought into the music, but it falls upon the listener to do so as well. You're going to like the challenge.

The track titles are anything but plain. In fact they are quite cryptic. It adds to that provocative aura of the work. Take for instance the first cut, **Splintered Gaze Remaining**. If one owned a mirror that reflected only sound, then this is what it would sound like, only shattered. The flute seems to be following the broken edges, this way, that way. Everywhere. Surprisingly, however, the pieces still fit. They still touch an adjoining section giving the music a substance that is reflective as well as solid.

A Far, A Way is a labyrinthian tone poem. Flute and guitar seem to call and answer each other with dark, somber qualities. Clements' playing seems covert, behind the curtain, whereas the guitar (s) appear to be in the forefront on cat like feet. You can still hear a few steps up until the very last moment.

Like the beginning line of some modern day Haiku, the tune **Subtle Pages and Fold** is enigmatic and much understated. A series of bass notes carves the path for the flute which follows and in this case, is quite restrained. Perhaps it is the Origami of sound that is shaped and pressed, pleated and smoothed. And then it emerges as wondrous art.

Water knows that it can follow the path of least resistance. In the tune **Tides Resisting** there is something definably liquid about this somewhat improvisational piece. It is as if the notes permeate the mind. They flow. They find every low spot, every nook and cranny, and fill those gaps. No ebb and flow here, just flow until one is full. Or perhaps a better word would be satiated.

Walking Ice Within is an ambitious jazz piece that is highly energetic and inspiring like an electrical charge. This is a pulse pounding soundscape with lots of sharp edges and divergent pathways. There is a harp like segment that is similar to looking through frosted glass. You can see a lot, but it is distorted and your mind can only grasp shapes. The music suggest caution on several levels.

Imagine yourself in a forest. A series of bell like tones resonates through a shroud of mist and fog as the tune **Pines and Ghosts** evolves. The theme is as darkly mysterious as one would expect, the atmosphere cold and drizzly. Your mind plays tricks on you as each tree is a vertical vestige of some unknown shape. Guitar and flute are separate entities in this one, only occasionally pairing. As I mentioned before, this music is complex.

Clear, cascading notes opens the final tune **Again to Red**. With a shrewd tapping technique, one guitar goes up the scale, the other dances around it. The flute, almost sounding like a heralding trumpet, joins in. The song is moody, serious, and, ironically, blue. Red for stop? Red for blood? In spirituality red symbolizes power, energy, and strength. Seeing red is completely different. There is a story here. You will just have to listen to the music and create your own story.

I'll have to admit, this music does its job. Kastning and company's music concepts are refreshing. Their anti-modal style gives you pause and forces you to ponder their motives with every new listen. That is what I meant by being challenged by the music. Highly listenable.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews