

HIGH two

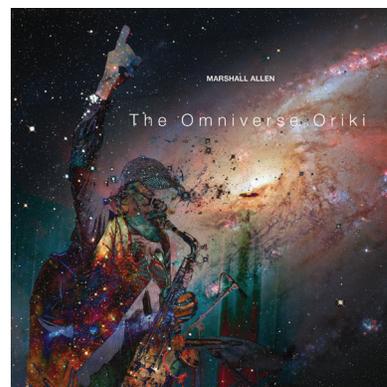
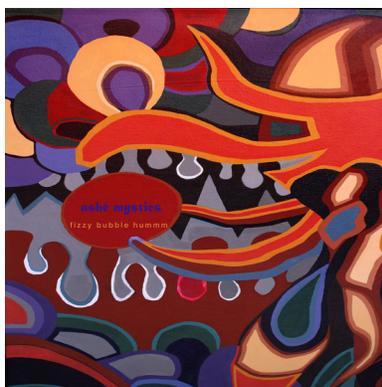
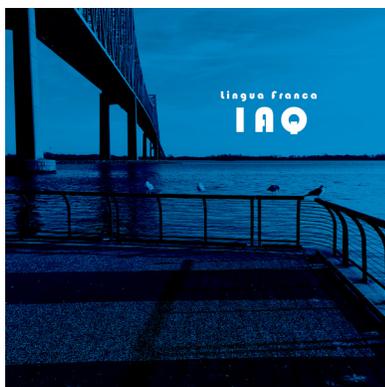
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Percussionist and drummer Kevin Diehl releases a trio of distinctive new projects, including a breathtaking collaboration with 100-year old maestro Marshall Allen.



Out this August and September via High Two Recordings, the albums also include debuts from Diehl's bands Ashé Mystics and Instant Arts Quartet

For more than 25 years, the venturesome Philadelphia-based percussionist **Kevin Diehl** has explored the pathways between avant-garde jazz and Afro-Cuban Yoruban percussion traditions. This summer, the sonic versatility and wide-ranging possibilities of Diehl's ever-evolving experiments will be showcased by three spiritually aligned but wildly diverse new releases.

Set for release in late August and early September from **High Two Recordings**, this eclectic trio of albums spotlights a broad spectrum of Diehl's artistry with three distinctive collaborations. Out **August 29**, the bracing ***Fizzy Bubble Hummm*** marks the debut of Diehl's **Ashé Mystics**, an electro-acoustic collaboration with guitarist and sound artist **Joshua Marquez** and drummer and multi-instrumentalist **Julius Masri**. Also released the same day is ***Lingua Franca***, the inaugural outing of the **Instant Arts Quartet** with tenor saxophonist **Terry Lawson**, trumpeter and reed player **Matt Lavelle**, and bassist/flutist **Pete Dennis**.

The Omniverse Oriki follows on **September 12**, presenting a very special meeting between centenarian saxophonist **Marshall Allen**, the legendary bandleader of the Sun Ra Arkestra, with the Afro-Cuban Yoruban cultural troupe **Ade Ilu Ensemble**. Also featuring Arkestra guitarist **DM Hotep** and cellist **Kash Killion**, ***The Omniverse Oriki*** is history in the making, a vibrant melding of ancient and future traditions.

All three releases will be available in a limited edition of 300 copies pressed on premium audiophile-quality 140-gram vinyl at Smashed Plastic, from Carl Saff audio lacquers and mastering.

Releasing all three projects in rapid succession provides an opportunity to display the dazzling array of inspiration generated by the commingling of these two singular yet interwoven musical traditions, according to Diehl. “I’ve been deeply involved in both jazz and Afro-Cuban music for most of my life,” he says. “It’s always been thrilling to see what can happen when those two worlds connect and collide. All three of these albums feature master musicians journeying together into unexplored territory.”

These three projects continue the experiments that Diehl has been developing throughout his career, most notably through his longtime ensemble Sonic Liberation Front. The albums follow the release earlier this year of *Onilu*, a groundbreaking all-percussion trio that teamed Diehl with Chicago Underground co-founder Chad Taylor and the legendary Joe Chambers, an original member of Max Roach’s foundational percussion ensemble M’Boom whose playing graced Blue Note classics by the likes of McCoy Tyner, Wayne Shorter, Sam Rivers, and Andrew Hill. Diehl counts the late Sunny Murray as a mentor and has worked with such greats as Oliver Lake, Odean Pope, Andy González, Khan Jamal, Michelle Rosewoman, Badal Roy, Donald Harrison Jr., and others.

Adding the indefatigable Marshall Allen to that list was an especially memorable experience considering that the saxophonist was approaching his landmark 100th birthday when *The Omniverse Oriki* was recorded. (Allen is still going strong a year and a half later at the age of 101.) Diehl’s Ade Ilu Ensemble received the call to join Allen’s shapeshifting group Ghost Horizons at the Philadelphia club Solar Myth on Halloween night 2023.

The chemistry was so scintillating that two days later they reconvened at Rittenhouse Soundworks Studio to capture what Alex Smith describes in his liner notes as, “narratives in African/Afro-Cuban dreamtime... an explosive macrocosmic reach into the residual ethers of the past to birth a new future.” Allen’s trio is sparked into cosmic raptures by the entrancing rhythms of the ensemble, in which Diehl is joined by **Joseph Toledo, Esteban “Tongo” Hernandez, John Wilkie, and Olufemi Mitchell.**

The pendulum swings harder to the free jazz side of the spectrum on *Lingua Franca*. Diehl stays primarily behind the drumkit for these improvisatory excursions, an outgrowth of AIRLFT, his ongoing residency at Philadelphia’s Commodore Barry Club. The Instant Arts Quartet is a subset of that series’ mutable ensemble, including longtime collaborator Terry Lawson (Odean Pope’s Saxophone Choir, Jamaaladeen Tacuma, Jymie Merritt’s Forerunners), Matt Lavelle (Ornette Coleman, William Parker, William Hooker). Pete Dennis (Search for the Infinite Light, William Parker, Spectral Forces). The four players veer between a staggering range of dynamics, from blistering cacophony to meditative atmospherics.

The Ashé Mystics are something else entirely, an uncategorizable blend of acoustic instruments, electronic soundscapes and sheer noise from both sources. The trio includes two drummer/percussionists and one guitarist/cellist but boasts a dizzying maelstrom of sound. “Ashé is a Yoruba word with multiple meanings,” Diehl explains. “The principle definitions being the power that manifests in all objects and events, as well as the power that causes change.” Musically that translates into a constant state of flux generated by Diehl, Julius Masri (Mephisto Halabi, Night Raids, Superlith) and Joshua Marquez (works performed by the Arditti Quartet, JACK Quartet, Brno Philharmonic).

Diehl's fate was sealed at the age of 19, when he heard the sound of unfamiliar rhythms in the air while on a walk through Central Park. He has continued to follow that percussive muse in the decades since, alongside and intersecting with his lifelong passion for jazz. These three exhilarating new releases reveal that the possibilities of that journey remain endless.

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