



CLUSTER

USA LIVE

Reworked Reissue (originally released 1997)
CD / 180g vinyl / download

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Tracklisting:

USA live 1 (Eugene Oregon)
USA live 2 (Portland Oregon)
USA live 3 (New York City)
USA live 4 (Providence
Rhode Island)
USA live 5 (Eugene Oregon)
USA live 6 (Phoenix Arizona)
USA live 7 (Phoenix Arizona)
USA live 8 (New York City)
USA live 9 (Minneapolis
Minnesota)

Promo contact:

Matthias Kümpflein
Tel. 0049-(0)40-881666-63
matthias@bureau-b.com

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Key info:

- Cluster (Dieter Moebius, Hans-Joachim Roedelius) are considered pioneers of electronic music and key Krautrock protagonists. In the late 1960s, together with Konrad Schnitzler as the trio Kluster, they changed the world of music for ever with their radical improvisations. Having split from Schnitzler, Moebius and Roedelius continued as Cluster, releasing eight further milestones of electronic and ambient music up until 1981, two of them with Brian Eno. In 1990 they returned to the fray with their "Apropos" album.
- Halfway through the decade they toured Japan ("Japan 1996 live") and the USA. The American episode saw Cluster frequently return to their roots. The duo's performances were less on the mellifluous side, rather more uncomfortable and rugged.
- **The recordings released in 1997 on Purple Pyramid as a double CD (entitled "First Encounter Tour") have been reworked and reselected in collaboration with the musicians.**
- On vinyl for the first time!
- New artwork

The US recordings are loud and impassioned. Some tracks are really loud, the mood is frankly disquieting. Tonal differences aside, this takes us back to Cluster's musical frame of mind in the early 1970s. Given the vast expressive repertoire on which Moebius and Roedelius could draw from almost twenty years of relentless experimentation, perhaps this ought not to surprise us. Furthermore, as artists of the moment, they are able to respond flexibly and immediately to the ambience, the situation, their own condition. Something in the USA was fundamentally different to Japan.

On the evidence of the US live recordings we can surmise that the USA tour was anything but introspective. As if Cluster were intent on proving that they were neither purveyors of cozy ambient electronica nor producers of new age muzak. The way they played America was completely unpredictable, sometimes even chaotic. Expansive passages switch abruptly with rhythmic stretches, raw noise erupts in quiet places—Moebius and Roedelius pull out all the stops. It all amounts to quite an ordeal for the audience, possibly even disappointing one or two listeners in the process. But Cluster's music was always multifaceted, so surprises were never far away.

The USA live album does not escort the listener to bright, mellifluous swaths, but to rugged, karstic regions, no less a part of Cluster's world. It is an uncomfortable album with rough edges. Still, it is a good thing that Moebius and Roedelius used these forceful improvisations to conclude their journey together for the foreseeable future. Cluster bid farewell to their listeners twice in 1996: softly and almost lost in reverie on "Japan live", then not long afterwards they went out with a bang on "First Encounter Tour/USA live". Once again the two musicians had shared the full spectrum of their artistic visions. Alas, a double goodbye does not make the split any easier. Fast-forwarding into the next millennium, however, we are happy to hear the cry: Cluster ahoy!

Asmus Tietchens