



Bio information: **ANTHONY PIROG**

Title: **PALO COLORADO DREAM** (Cuneiform Rune 398) Format: CD / DIGITAL DOWNLOAD

Cuneiform promotion dept: (301) 589-8894 / fax (301) 589-1819

email: joyce [-at-] cuneiformrecords.com (Press & world radio); radio [-at-] cuneiformrecords.com (North American & world radio)

www.cuneiformrecords.com

FILE UNDER: JAZZ / ROCK / EXPERIMENTAL

**Washington D.C.'s Leading Jazz/Experimental/Rock Guitarist,
Anthony Pirog,
Goes National with *Palo Colorado Dream*,
His Debut Album as a Trio Leader
with Acclaimed Drummer Ches Smith and Bassist Michael Formanek**

Washington, D.C.'s thriving jazz and experimental music scenes wouldn't be quite where they are today without **Anthony Pirog**. The guitarist, composer and loops magician is a quiet but ubiquitous force on stages around his hometown. With fearsome chops and a keen ear for odd beauty, Pirog has helped expand the possibilities of jazz, rock and experimentalism in a city formerly known for its straight-ahead tradition. Pirog performs regularly in a broad spectrum of venues (and musical contexts) across DC – jazz and rock clubs, the **Kennedy Center Millennium Stage**, art galleries and museums, the annual **Sonic Circuits Festival of Experimental Music**, and much more. DC has a rich legacy of brilliant guitarists and gifted composers – **Danny Gatton, Roy Buchanan, John Fahey**, and **Duke Ellington** come to mind for key roles they played in the city's 20th Century musical past. In the cutting-edge cultural and technological mecca that is the new, 21st Century Washington, **Anthony Pirog** is DC's leading guitarist/composer and fast rising star.

Palo Colorado Dream—recorded with the all-star trio of **Michael Formanek** on bass and **Ches Smith** on drums—is Pirog's **Cuneiform Records** debut as a bandleader, and it marks the young innovator's entrance onto the national stage. The album's 11 tracks have an immersive depth and understated allure that hold the listener rapt. And they illustrate all the various realms of Pirog's artistry: the spinning fantasy-scape of his loops and the hard-nosed technical power of his soloing, his patience with a slow build and his knack for moments of fierce catharsis.

"I've been playing these songs for years in various ensembles. It was an exciting challenge to make it work in the trio setting," Pirog says. "Mike and Ches and I didn't rehearse as a trio before we went into the studio, but I wasn't worried: I knew I'd like what they did. And I knew we'd all be able to move between playing more traditionally over these tunes, and taking it out into new directions."

Indeed, the album coheres remarkably, working its way into your ear gradually like water seeping into cloth. You'll hear a vast array of influences on this record—everyone from **Sonny Sharrock, Alan Holdsworth** and **Bill Frisell** to contemporary indie experimentalists like **Bibio, Daedelus** and **Godspeed You! Black Emperor**. But things never get dizzying or lose track of themselves; Pirog's meaty, distorted looping and his classical guitar fingerwork are both interpolated cleanly into a holistic vision.

Palo Colorado Dream's eponymous opener stems from a loops improvisation Pirog played at a solo concert; he listened back to a bootleg, then taught it to himself and re-recorded it. "**Minimalist**" is a collection of independent musical "cells" that the band plays through multiple times, with varied strategies—it moves from skittering misdirections into head-wagging, dubsteppy groove. "**The New Electric**" begins with foreboding, open guitar chords, full of tube-amp resonance, and climaxes five minutes later in a swirl of loops, unswerving drumbeats and soaring electric guitar deliverance.

In an enthusiastic *New York Times* concert review this spring, Ben Ratliff wrote that "Pirog's electric guitar . . . involves careful chords and explicit, jazz-related harmonies but also and more often a freaky action-painting of effects and textures by means of a dozen or so digital pedals."

As one-half of **Janel & Anthony**, his guitar/cello/electronics duo with **Janel Leppin**, Pirog is already a proven expert at painting ambient sounds with wide, lush brushstrokes. Janel & Anthony's 2012 release on Cuneiform, called *Where Is Home*, brought the duo international acclaim (4 stars from *DownBeat* and *BBC Music Magazine*) and Washington music awards. As an ambitious bandleader, organizer and conceptualist in D.C., Pirog keeps himself immersed in a range of projects—from solo and small-ensemble work to recent stagings (for the Sonic Circuits Festival) of **Terry Riley's** "In C" that have featured over 20 musicians performing the minimalist masterwork.

[press release continued on verso]

As a child, Pirog spent time living in Maryland and Carmel Valley, California (hence the Western memories that inspired the album title), but when he was 9 his family settled in a Northern Virginia suburb of D.C. It was there that he dug into his father's record collection, rich with jazz and blues and doo-wop and surf-rock from the middle of the century, and started fooling around with his dad's Jaguar. Pirog remembers hearing area guitar heroes **Danny Gatton** and **Roy Buchanan**, and being transfixed without understanding why. "Later I realized that I enjoyed the fact that their music was a blend of many styles," he says. "It was like a country-jazz kind of approach, a blend of popular music till the 1970s. They both had crazy, virtuosic technique, and it felt exciting because it was very close to me."

Pirog went on to study at **Berklee College of Music** for two years before transferring to **NYU**, where he took advantage of the Big Apple's wide range of musical offerings. Most often, he split time between the **Village Vanguard**, where he heard jazz shows from the likes of Frisell and **Kurt Rosenwinkel**, and **Tonic**, **John Zorn's** hotbed of weirdo rock experimentalism. "I was really into the music Zorn was putting out on **Tzadik**. I saw **Marc Ribot**, **Derek Bailey**, **Elliott Sharp**, a bunch of free improvisers."

But perhaps the most lasting impression was made by **Paul Motian**, whose lithe but restrained drumming and perceptive, melodic compositional style inspired "**Motian**," track 9 on *Palo Colorado Dream*. "Some of his songs were just one chord, and there'd be this haunting melody on top of it, and that hit me hard," Pirog says. "His music can be very emotional, and it can feel simple and beautiful, but when you listen deeply it's very intelligent and refined. It hits me in a way that **Satie** does: It can say a lot without doing too much."

For all his technical prowess and his love of lush layering, the same could be said of Pirog. *Palo Colorado Dream* is only the first chapter in what will be a fascinating recording career as a leader.

For more information on Anthony Pirog:

www.anthonypirog.com - [www.twitter.com/anthonypirog](https://twitter.com/anthonypirog) - www.cuneiformrecords.com

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

Digital [High-Resolution] versions of these images are available for download on the Anthony Pirog artist page @ www.cuneiformrecords.com



Cuneiform asked Anthony Pirog to talk about his new album, PALO COLORADO DREAMS. Here's what he said:

What does the name of the album mean to you?

The name *Palo Colorado Dream* refers to Palo Colorado Road which runs near Route 1 in Big Sur, CA. When I was young, my family lived about half an hour north of Big Sur and I spent a lot of time there. It's always been my favorite place. The album title refers to the feeling I get when I think about the memories I have of being there and wishing that I could feel that way again.

What can you tell me about this album? What's its significance to you?

This album is a collection of material that I've been composing over the last 10 years. It covers a wide range of stylistic ground, which reflects the many musical interests and influences I've had since I pretty much started playing the guitar. It's my first full-length release using the guitar trio format. It's also my first recording as the sole band leader. I was extremely fortunate to have worked with both Michael Formanek and Ches Smith on these tracks. Artistically it's everything that I wanted the music to be and I am very proud of this work.

What would you like the public know about this album?

This music isn't meant to be any one genre in particular. But I'd also like people to know that I'm not intentionally trying to mix genres. I am just trying to compose music that is honest to me and my experiences, and that is pieced together by what draws me to music.

How did you determine song titles?

I try to base song titles on the feeling that the specific piece of music exudes. I will usually be drawn to a memory based on the emotion of a piece, and then I'll come up with a title that is directly or indirectly linked with that memory.

Anything interesting happen when you were making/ recording this album?

Mike, Ches and I had never performed together before we met in the studio. I had also never performed with either one of them separately in another live situation. I wasn't exactly sure what the final result was going to be but I am a huge fan of their individual work as both bandleaders and sidemen so I knew I wouldn't be disappointed in the slightest. The record exceeded all of my

expectations and to me these are the definitive performances of this material. I am so lucky to have recorded these tracks with them. They gave the music a lot of life and pushed me to perform at my best.

Anything special about the cover art?

The triple exposure shots featured in the album artwork were taken by Janel Leppin during our 2007 trip to Big Sur. We spent a week there because I really wanted to show her the place and share with her how special it is to me. She had a camera that was failing at the time so when we had the film developed, all of the photos were mixed up and printed on top of each other. We both thought that the photographs were very beautiful, and she let me use the shots for my album artwork. (The camera stopped working after that roll of film.)

What big gigs have you done in the past few years?

Janel and I toured Europe in May of 2014. This trio with Mike and Ches did an East Coast run in January of 2014.

Will you be touring after the release of this album? Where?

We will be hitting NYC (IBeam), Baltimore (Creative Differences) and DC (Capital Bop) on December 12th, 13th and 14th.

Future recording plans?

Janel and I are working on writing and recording our third Janel & Anthony record (Cuneiform released our second album, *Where is Home*, in 2012). I would like to do a sextet recording as a bandleader in the very near future. I would also like to do another solo guitar record of compositions using overdubs.

WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT:

ANTHONY PIROG

PALO COLORADO DREAM

CUNEIFORM (2014)

“...Janel & Anthony only scratches the surface of what Anthony can do. *Palo Colorado Dream*,... is a record by a guitarist of ample depth and breadth...He sets no stylistic rules, each song delves into a style...as a vehicle for delivering a certain feel. This always feels like Pirog’s record, the presence of major musicians like Formanek and Smith be damned, and that’s no small feat.

...A record that’s equally capable of enchanting you and pummeling you with many shades of aura in between, *Palo Colorado Dream* catapults Anthony Pirog into the corps of elite experimental guitarists.”

– S. Victor Aaron, *Something Else Reviews*, October 7, 2014, somethingelserreviews.com

“One of jazz’s most reliable conduits to a living, breathing audience is electric-guitar heroism, and Anthony Pirog...seems poised to become a hero of the instrument.”

– Ben Ratliff, “Fall Arts Preview,” *The New York Times*, September 2014, www.nytimes.com

“From Roy Clark to Ian MacKaye, the District has never had a shortage of well-known guitar players in its ranks. It has been rare, though, to find a D.C. guitarist with the rich originality of Anthony Pirog. Basing his playing on a pliant, crystalline tone that’s immediately recognizable as his own, Pirog molds and remolds that sound into any shape he needs in a given moment.”

– Michael J. West, “Anthony Pirog Trio at Twins Jazz,” *Washington City Paper*, August 31, 2014, www.washingtoncitypaper.com

“So this is what all the fuss is about...Anthony Pirog’s status as Washington, D.C. area guitar god...*Palo Colorado Dream*, Pirog’s 2014 Cuneiform debut as a leader, often finds him fully energized, cranking up his electric guitar and arsenal of effects and joined by two very fine avant jazz accompanists, acoustic bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Ches Smith ... The intimate “I’m Not Coming Home” finds Pirog on acoustic classical guitars...attacks of pure sonic squelch and noise follow the angular post-bop theme of “Heads,”...and the guitarist burns his fretboard Sonny Sharrock style during the closing free jazz noise-fest “Vicious Cricket.” ... *Palo Colorado Dream* is an Anthony Pirog session all the way, and an ear-opening display of his stunningly wide range of talents.”

- Dave Lynch, *All Music*, October 2014, www.allmusic.com

“The decorated, Berklee-trained, award-winning guitarist from Vienna, VA is often referred to as a “guitar hero.” ...*Palo Colorado Dream*,...is an awesome place for listeners. ... ‘Location’ and ‘being’ are fluid throughout *Palo Colorado Dream*, as the title suggests. Material places intermingle with childhood memories to inspire songs that sound like lucid dreaming.

...the album’s musical variety, an accomplishment to marvel at considering *Palo Colorado Dream*’s expansive sound was made by only three musicians: Pirog, bassist Michael Formanek, and drummer Ches Smith. ...the performances are incredible. “The Great Northern” begins with a light, airy groove giving a nod to bossa-nova before segueing into a more swinging shuffle, setting the stage for Pirog to rip out a solo that’s both melodic and technically accomplished. ... It’s this incredible amount of feeling, and its intensity, that separates Pirog’s experimentalism from other experimental records... *Palo Colorado Dream* sounds like organic excitement and childlike wonder. ...‘Since instrumental music is usually expressive of a specific emotion, listeners can make all kinds of personalized associations. It is my job to try to make sure that it is performed well and feels good, even if it’s atonal or experimental music.’ ... This emphasis on helping the listener make personalized associations also makes Pirog’s music incredibly accessible as instrumental music. A lot of jazz, prog-rock, and fusion records... can be complex and intimidating in their virtuosity... Not so with *Palo Colorado Dream*... “[Pirog says]...I wrote all of the music in a very intuitive way. I was really just trying to incorporate the elements of music that get me excited to listen and play.”...”

– Gregory Ayers, “FIRST LISTEN AND INTERVIEW: “PALO COLORADO DREAM,” *DC Music Download*, October 7, 2014, www.dcmusicdownload.com

“I’ll be recording with my trio soon, I’m working on a third solo guitar album, and I’ve also started a sextet...’ enthuses Anthony Pirog, whose playing encompasses everything from free improvisation to rock to blues to country to jazz. Pirog’s latest release, Janel and Anthony’s *Where Is Home* [Cuneiform], is a stunning collaboration with cellist Janel Leppin. Employing sophisticated looping, umpteen effects pedals, an intriguing choice of instruments, and copious creativity, the duo have fashioned a beautiful and singular work that is avant-garde in approach yet alluring to hipsters and the non-cognoscenti alike. ...much of his musical trip was gleaned from watching and listening to guitarists of all stripes. ‘I’m into Derek Bailey, Fred Firth, Nels Cline, Jim Hall, Bill Frisell, Jerry Donahue, Brent Mason, Marc Rizzo, John Fahey, Cliff Gallup, Scotty Moore, you name it.’ ... ‘Danny Gattton and Roy Buchanon were also big influences. I studied jazz, and I really enjoyed listening to Anthony Braxton and Albert Ayler—but it’s also hard to beat simple, pretty music with a great melody.’ ...”
– Barry Cleveland, “Approachable Experimentalism: Anthony Pirog’s Loopy Cross-Genre Melodicism”, *Guitar Player*, Jan. 2013, www.guitarplayer.com

“FOUR NEW ELECTRIC GUITAR PLAYERS OF NOTE... Honorable Mentions...Anthony Pirog”
– *Guitar Player*, September 2012

“Janel and Anthony...’ original experimental music for guitar and cello’: a strong but digestible brew of folk, post-rock, jazz, classical and country, topped off with a heavy dose of electronic effects and studio processing. ...that bunch of styles is just a fraction of Pirog’s vast knowledge base—a healthy cross-section of which appears on...*Palo Colorado Dream*. Pirog’s first love was and is roots music, including blues and rockabilly... He also plays surf guitar in an outfit called the El Rays, and frequently travels in noise/ambient/free-improvisation circles...Still, Pirog is best known as a jazz artist in his hometown, tackling styles from postbop to fusion to the avant-garde.

The ensemble Pirog uses on *Palo Colorado Dream* is a standard guitar trio formation, featuring bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Ches Smith—two players who inhabit the outer edges of the jazz world. It covers a sprawling musical terrain—avant-jazz, atmospheric soundscapes, earthy Americana, math-rock, even a piece that was directly inspired by his Riley performance, with an arsenal of effects hardware and studio production techniques—but with a definite emphasis on improvisation.”

– Michael J. West, “Meet Anthony Pirog, A Postmodern Guitar Hero In The Making: “A mix of... all this information,” *JazzTimes*, August 7, 2014, www.jazztimes.com

JANEL & ANTHONY

WHERE IS HOME?

CUNEIFORM (2012)

“Extraordinarily beautiful, new age-ish, post-everything cello and guitar music.”

– Jennifer P. Kelly, *30 Seconds Over*, July 25, 2012

“A dynamic DC duo versed in the East, the West, and the rest. Janel & Anthony...Together, they've studied and performed everything from surf rock to jazz, modern classical, and Hindustani ragas, and those assorted influences mesh into one beautiful, indecipherable whole on *Where is Home*...”

...*Where is Home* is delicate, somber, and easygoing... between its elongated melodies and slowly building structures, *Where is Home* is hypnotic and, at times, almost ambient.

And though cello and guitar are the album's primary drivers, it also benefits from a wealth of textures. "A Viennesian Life" is one of the most lush songs...weaving together a gentle motif with a quilt of timbres: harpsichord, lap-steel guitar, lap harp, mandolin, Mellotron, and more. Elsewhere, baritone guitar gives a tiny *Twin Peaks* touch, and loops are utilized on nearly every track.”

– Scott Morrow, “**This Week’s Best Albums: May 22, 2012,**” *Alarm*, May 2012, www.alarmmagazine.com

“...’Big Sur’ begins in floating ambience thanks to the duo's mastery of electronics and looping... **Leppin's** North Indian and Persian classical music background and **Pirog's** abilities on both the electric sitar and guitar are fully displayed on this powerful track, with a jagged theme, rhythmic drive, and soloing suggesting a **21st century instrumental version of the Byrds' "Eight Miles High" for the post-post-rock generation.** ...they use loops and electronics as a mood-setting backdrop for their compositions. The chorus of "Leaving the Woods" is announced by an echoed chord strum that centers the listener's attention without weighing down the tune's dreamy float...

Janel & Anthony also acquit themselves nicely as an entirely acoustic classical-folk cello-guitar duo on the all-too-brief ‘Auburn Road,’ and disturb their reveries with free-form improvising...buzzing, clanging and clatterig noise on “Where Will We Go.” The latter track references a theme of rootless wandering and displacement running as an undercurrent throughout the CD... A sometimes deeply beautiful album...”

– Dave Lynch, *All Music*, May 22, 2012, www.allmusic.com

“Music that...combines novel approaches to the song form, perhaps with less improvising, comes via Janel & Anthony’s *Where is Home*... It’s two absolute virtuosos, Janel Leppin on cello, loops, and electronics; Anthony Pirog on guitar, loops, and electronics. The result is a marvelous surprise at every turn, as the duo creates atmospheres that at times evoke the music of Steve Tibbetts, Brian Eno, even soundtrack music.

The first cut, ‘Big Sur,’ is all 6/4 groove, an uptempo burner that highlights Pirog’s fiery chops on electric 12-string guitar and Leppin’s aggressive touch on pizzicato cello... the lyrical ‘Leaving the Woods’... showcases Leppin’s clear facility on cello and mirrors Tibbett’s warm shadings, with deft use of loops. ‘Lily in the Garden’ is an exquisite display of Pirog’s simple, chordal guitar against Leppin’s evocative cello. [Rating: 4 stars]”

– John Ephland, *Downbeat Magazine*, March 2013

“Janel and Anthony are **one of the most unusual bands I have ever come across yet are also one of the most enthralling**...this instrumental duo bring together so many styles and structures...what has enthralled me with his album is how it can go from beautiful classically inspired call and response to Hindustani ragas, surf rock licks, to Appalachian laments and post-bop harmonies. Musically and response is to call this ‘progressive’ as it truly is...

...one album that is **invigorating and beautiful, simple yet hard to fathom, beguiling and entrancing yet also harsh and unforgiving... it is unlike anything I have ever heard, yet I am quite sure that I would very much like to hear more...this is essential.**”
– Kev Rowland, *Mlwz.pl*, June 7, 2013, www.mlwz.ceti.pl

“...Leppin’s ability to transcend classical training on the cello to this new wave of eclectic, experimental music makes it so interesting to listen to. From the pleasantly haunting riffs and tones produced from the cello on “The Clearing” or to the more lyrical melodies on “Broome’s Orchard,” Leppin is bringing a new style to the table.

Pirog’s evident talent on the guitar complements Leppin on the cello. The electronics are not overused... As a duo, Janel and Anthony are a force to be reckoned in the experimental genre. Together, their talent and professional training has made a brave leap in new age music... *Where Is Home* embodies key characteristics of a great album and leaves listeners wanting to hear more. In A Word: Brave.”

– Danielle Nielsen, *The Aquarian*, September 10, 2012, www.theaquarian.com

“**Cellist Leppin and guitarist Pirog put together some intuitive music that altho only involves the two of them often sounds much more lavish.** At first I heard it as a sort of New Age approach...but now I feel it is more in the area of **new music and ambient electronics.** There are some dronescapes as well as...more acoustic numbers.”

– John Henry, *Audiophile Audition*, October 5, 2012, www.audaud.com

“Janel & Anthony is not a jazz group. Janel & Anthony is not an indie-rock band. They are not a classical duo. Janel & Anthony are in a genre all of their own... the electro-acoustic duo has quickly achieved a cult following among the experimental music community.

Janel’s classical training and Anthony’s jazz abilities combined to form a radical new sound... that sound has developed into a cohesive array of original music that sweeps and undulates with digitally altered tones and subtle rhythms.

The mood overall is melancholy and beautiful, evoking the emotions of a vagabond musician. From the rock-leaning “Big Sur” to the cinematic “Where Will We Go,” the duo masterfully crafts soundscapes using a collection of effects pedals...”

– Giovanni Russonello & Luke Stewart. “D.C.’s best records of 2012: The Top 5”, *Capital Bop*, December 20, 2012, www.capitalbop.com

“...whatever heading you try and file *Where Is Home* under proves inadequate. The opening track, ‘Big Sur’, evokes the jazz-rock Mahavishnu Orchestra, before we are taken into ‘The Clearing’, surrounded by electroacoustic sounds harking back to musique concrète, conjuring the spirit of French composer Pierre Schaeffer. .. Altogether, though, a beguiling and thoughtfully crafted album: just don’t expect any swing or bop!”

– Barry Witherden, *Classical-music.com*, www.classical-music.com

“...the music is instantly approachable. About half the tracks are short, atmospheric, or collage-like pieces that jibe with the duo’s deep involvement in D.C.’s avant garde scene, but none are truly out-there...The other tracks are longish and intentionally adventurous, but they tell stories instead of pushing limits. Jaunty album-opener “Big Sur” has a repeated, Primus-like run, but overall the song is more Byrds than math rock. And when Janel brings out her Japanese koto for a solo in the enigmatic, deceptively complex “Leaving the Woods,” it’s perfectly suited for the situation. The song itself—a dance between sun and shade—deserves to have one of those elegantly grown-up iPad games built around it. ‘Where Will We Go’ begins with a delicate, lyrical motif that teeters on the edge of darkness...before giving way to discordant sounds... it evokes a life where the purer powers of melody temporarily succumb to the special seductions of sonic chaos. ...the musicians... really know how to own a mood.” – Joe Warminsky, “A guitar-and-cello duo’s approachable experimentalism”, *Washington City Paper*, June 8, 2012, www.washingtoncitypaper.com

“Seeing experimental cello/guitar duo Janel & Anthony is always the sort of thing that can improve any given night.”

– Valerie Paschall, “Weekly Music Agenda”, *DCist*, December 17, 2012, www.dcist.com

“You wouldn’t necessarily think that a cello and an electric guitar could engage in such an intimate, melding dialogue as they do on avant-garde duo Janel Leppin and Anthony Pirog’s sophomore album, *Where Is Home*... this collaboration... [is] about the two instruments interacting in a way that coaxes out the different innate textures and personalities that lie dormant within each one.

... *Where Is Home* is an expansive album that mixes long-form pieces with shorter interludes... The album opener “Big Sur”... is a gypsy of a piece, showing the range of influences at play... Strummed guitar leads into what initially sounds like a standard rock song until short jazz licks start punctuating the music, with the cello pulling the song into an eastern sounding melody... The following track, “The Clearing”... a brief sonic landscape built upon hesitantly bowed cello and scratchy electronic effects... Within the first two tracks, Janel & Anthony show that they’re willing and well equipped to follow their musical impulses in any direction... each song employing its own unique textures and tonalities to bring to life an imagined space and moment in time.

Where Is Home is an album you’ll want to spend time with, and each listen will likely grab your attention in a different manner...

Where Is Home seems to answer the question it poses—if you can always find what you’re looking for in the music, then maybe home isn’t a physical place at all, maybe home is *in* the music.”

– Nida Maisulis, *DC Music Download*, August 24, 2012, www.dcmusicdownload.com

“...the duo’s own elusive style. It’s detailed and exploratory, spacious and often wistful, and very well mannered. No single instrument dominates the space. Janel and Anthony clearly have a high-functioning, harmonious musical partnership.

Their songs are for the most part tight and disciplined with ear-grabbing, repeating themes and space reserved for non-indulgent

soloing. The rapid-fire "Big Sure" is some kind of a gypsy bluegrass hoedown, driven by Leppin's ostinato, Pirog's twangy picking, and some exciting unison runs. Many of the other tracks are more somber...

Linking most of the longer tracks are short, spontaneous-sounding pieces that vibrate in sympathy with their neighbors and keep the album flowing... "Cross the Williamsburg Bridge" and "Auburn Road" stand out as lovely little tunes... Janel & Anthony's music brims with emotion and personality. *Where is Home* is a gem, and seriously cool from start to finish."

-The Mule, *Difficult Music*, September 6, 2012, diffmusic.blogspot.com

"...the album reflects the restless nature of a rootless life and a longing for home... the album... mixes Hindustani rhythms, sitar, Janel's Saarang Maestro Dx... as well as conventional guitars and cello on the direct and jaunty rhythm of Anthony's *Big Sur*, a song atypical of the rest of the album. ... Strange electronica inform some of the shorter tracks, while others go for a more organically ambient feel. The album has deep warmth of sound... The ambient pieces... give the album a foundation on which to build achingly beautiful and melancholic pieces such as *Leaving The Woods*, Anthony's liquid guitar skirting and caressing the dresses of Janel's koto. ... When the electronics are stripped away to a bare minimum and the more exotic instrumentation is laid to one side, as on *Lily In The Garden*, a careworn soul is revealed in the interplay between the cello and the acoustic and electric guitars. On *Mustang Song* both players don electric guitars and over loops deliver an almost post-rock inflection that leaves impressions of early instrumental Felt before more liquid guitar runs take it downstream to somewhere else entirely... A fine piece of work from the Washington duo that leaves me wanting more. ... Apparently Cuneiform had not signed a local act in more than a decade, so the capture of Janel & Anthony must indicate a mutual faith and belief. I think the duo and the label are made for each other, and hopefully their impressionistic sound palette will now reach the wider audience it deserves. ... Conclusion: 8 out of 10"

- Roger Trenwith, *Dutch Progressive Rock Page*, Volume 41, www.dprp.net

"Those who think there's nothing happening in the music scene right now are either not listening... are not reading... or don't care... Janel & Anthony, two... folks... making some really stunning space-age retro-modern ambient post-psychedelia that will make you put away your Fripp and Eno for a while and climb into something new.

This is music that sounds like home to me. Anthony Pirog... plays tasteful ambient psychedelic sorts of things. Janel Leppin gets a burnished beauty from her cello and the two get a frothy sort of cosmos in your head going. Sometimes it is very ambient in that cavernous way and sometimes it is a chamber kind of closeness, but in any event this is music to take very seriously... it's lyrical, poetic and oh so hip. ...you can go lyrical and cosmic and not necessarily sound like everybody else, while still showing a place in a lineage that goes back, to Fripp and Floyd, mesmeric Byrds' moments, mesmeric Smiths moments, Terje Rypdal on a cloud, and on anon... it's a new version of the real cosmic deal... **Trust me, it's good music.**"

- Grego Applegate Edwards, *Gaplegate Guitar and Bass Blog*, April 12, 2013

"**Janel Leppin and Anthony Pirog** are two musicians living between worlds and sometimes states... associated with the avant-garde music scene in Washington D.C... their music tends to be melodic and often serene; an ambient chamber music but with some sharp edges... their real relationship began with music that they would play at Leppin's home on an isolated estate of cottages in Wederburn, Virginia. ... There's definitely a sense of rootlessness in the record and also in our lives," explains Leppin. But it also comes from... my family living in a forest of my family ancestry for five generations, and then having that destroyed by bulldozers... The couple embody a cluster of influences struggling to fit together. Pirog plays guitar and lots of electronics. He comes from a family of musicians. 'My dad played in a surf band in New Jersey in the '60s,'... 'I was really interested in that downtown scene,' says Pirog. '**Fred Frith, Derek Bailey**, players like **Bill Frisell, Marc Ribot**, people like that.'

Those avant-garde influences were tempered by rock and things like **The Byrds**. ..."

- John Diliberto, "The Avant-garde is Made Beautiful by This Washington D.C. Ambient Chamber Music Duo" *The Echoes Blog*, December 21, 2012

"Their music is a mixture of raw acoustic beauty and crazed audio collage. *Where Is Home* hit me like a ton of bricks when I heard it partly because my own concept of home was very much in flux at the time. They're a blast to see live... a powerful experience."

- Jason Crane, "The Jazz Session #383: Janel and Anthony", *The Jazz Session*, June 21, 2012, www.thejazzsession.com

"...DC-area duo, Janel Leppin (cello, electronics) and Anthony Pirog (guitar, electronics) combine downy ambience, jazz flavored excursions, high-lonesome Americana, and cinematic twang (think Ennio Morricone's music for assorted spaghetti Westerns). Pirog's six-strings have the gentle/genteel, free-ranging surreal feel of Bill Frisell and a bit of the tension/sustain of Robert Fripp; Leppin has a deeply woody, supple tone... Music to get lost within, a duo to watch. [Rating: 3½ stars]"

- Mark Keresman, "Keresman on Disc", *Icon Magazine*, August 2012

"...cellist Janel Leppin and guitarist Anthony Pirog [sic]... combine with... some electronics and loops to create a sound world all their own, falling in-between the cracks of jazz, classical and cinematic music. "Big Sur" opens with a deeply felt bass line and some jangly guitar. Developing into an electric prog-rock type section where Lepin's cello swoops... with a vaguely Middle Eastern sounding voice. ... The next few tracks combine into a medley of slow and spooky soundscapes, eerie and textural. "Lily in the Garden" features ghostly slow guitar and cello that ebbs and flows like the tide, slow and probing with a ravishing sound... This was an unusual and enigmatic album, created as if the sounds are coming from a hall of mirrors where nothing is as it seems. Fans of outsider music and post-rock experiments should consider this worth their while."

- Tim Niland, *Music and More*, May 24, 2012, jazzandblues.blogspot.com

“The name makes them sound like a 60s folk throwback, their pedigrees suggest academic experimentalism, and the cover of their second album, *Where is Home*, evokes a hipster roots-rock eclecticism. Strikingly, all of that (and a bit more besides) is present in Janel and Anthony’s music, but its combination is neither precious nor forbiddingly cerebral...

Janel Leppin and guitarist Anthony Pirog craft something accessible yet mysterious, an engaging mélange that’s at once unadornedly direct and fiercely eclectic. Melancholy acoustic melodies are suddenly swallowed by a swarm of agitated loops, or an elegant chamber piece gets lost within a dense thicket of psych-rock blooms. There’s a severe but lovely quality to much of the duo’s music, akin to a fairy-tale forest encased in glass.”

- Shaun Brady, *Philadelphia City Paper*, October 31, 2013, www.citypaper.net

“Seamlessly blending acoustic and electric instruments with cutting-edge electronics, enhanced by a discreet sprinkling of percussion (though without drums), Janel & Anthony’s music possesses a uniquely intimate charm and gently wistful tone... Though the instrumentation... is surprisingly rich, the compositions hinge on the sleek interplay between Leppin’s cello and Pirog’s electric guitar on an entrancing backdrop of skillfully employed loops.

The elegiac nature of *Where Is Home*... unfolds gradually, as opener “Big Sur” is jaunty romp with the heady Eastern flavour contributed by Leppin’s sitar and Saarang Maestro DX... while pizzicato cello lends a sharp, almost percussive rhythm that complements the insistent chime of Pirog’s guitar. Then, “The Clearing” marks a shift in tone... slight element of dissonance in the track’s sedate, meditative mood vaguely tinged with menace... The longer tracks are interspersed by short, ambient-like interludes mostly based on electronics...

In “A Viennesian Life” two mellotrons... add further layers to the lush atmosphere of the piece, in which several different strains play at the same time and are expertly meshed by the two musicians. An exquisite album that conflates impeccable formal skill with genuine feeling, *Where Is Home* is highly recommended to lovers of chamber-rock and instrumental music that privileges atmosphere and emotion over complexity for its own sake... the album is surprisingly accessible.”

- Raffaella Berry, *Prog Sphere*, December 18, 2012, www.prog-sphere.com

“*Where Is Home*... of one of the most exhilarating vehicles of sound this year. Hypnotic, progressive, spiritual, technical, unique... it felt like one of the easiest yet most complex listens of this year... ethereal as it gets, shining with a glowing intensity of meditative sounds that transcends the liner approach of pop structures. ...the electronics are used in the most soft and gentle ways while stringed instrumentation cascades in color after color of emotional weight. Every song is a remarkable undertaking of sound... Recorded in analog, this is a record I can’t even begin to describe how great it truly is. ... *Where Is Home* starts with the electrifying and technically moving song “Big Sur”. The cello and guitar build around a Mahavishnu Orchestra esk tandem that leads the two in circles of intoxicating melodies... “Leaving The Woods” builds on a slow churning fire of sound... The guitar solo is one of the most incredible on the album... You can hear small inflections of the blues, jazz, prog rock and so much more in this drawn out solo from guitarist Anthony Pirog. ... The technical approach of the album is never over drawn... *Where Is Home* has that calming and natural feeling where you know every piece of sound is placed with complete dedication to depicting emotions... one of the most stunning records this year and will surely be a much spoken about record for some time... a mind blowing record that will stay in my listening rotation for years.”

- Erik Otis, *Sound Color Vibration*, June 12, 2012, www.soundcolourvibration.com

“...there’s nothing typical at all about Washington, D.C.-based duo Janel & Anthony. They don’t sing, they don’t play jazz, they sure as hell don’t play pop... Janel Leppin excels at the cello, while Anthony Pirog is a virtuoso at guitar... Janel will play modified cellos, a harpsichord, a Japanese koto, play a vintage analog synthesizer and generate electronic washes; Anthony will play guitars of all stripes, including an electric sitar, lap steel and a baritone guitar. Both of them make great use of loops, too.

With this odd array of instruments, they create music that can only be classified as “experimental” because there’s no formal category to put it in... There’s a new age/ambient tenor with *Where Is Home* that comes from the dreamy soundscapes, the total lack of percussion and a de-emphasis on outright improvisation. Dig deeper, and you’ll find they are masters at putting together countless, intricate touches with a chamber music ideal to create sonically rich tapestry. With folk-like melodies, each song breathes like an organism, helped along by an intelligent use of electronics to enhance, not overtake, their main areas of skills with the cello and guitar. A team that seems capable of performing anything, Janel & Anthony choose the path of high art.”

- S. Victor Aaron, *Something Else!*, September 6, 2012, www.somethingelsereviews.com

“Janel and Anthony... ‘Where is Home’ is a vibrant mash-up of virtuoso cello parts (including some amazing solo runs) from Janel Leppin and guitar carousing from maestro Anthony Pirog... With the addition synths of electronics, and featuring a selection of pre-made loops the stage it set for some exploratory instrumental pieces, not least the dramatic opening cut ‘Big Sur,’ which leaps everywhere at once as it surges out the speakers. Elsewhere the mood is avante-garde... and slightly bucolic and melodic... and slightly menacing. I was reminded of the work of Ralph Towner... An excellent album whose variety, musicianship and vivacity makes it recommended.”

- *The Terrascope*, April 2013

“‘A Viennesian life’ shows a substantial balance between sloping complexness and economic dimensionality; the sudden debut of an engrossing bass line instantly transports the track towards a deeper level of conduction of dear memories. The CD’s finest contents reside in this neighborhood: in the subsequent “Broome’s Orchard” we discover a reserved elegance not deprived of true sentiment, Lappin and Pirog’s commitment still vivid in spite of a thoughtful composure; a beautiful episode, perhaps the release’s top. The duo’s specialty lies in their capacity of combining ‘desolate America’ landscaping and charming exotic recollection... In essence, the project works fine enough. These confident players articulate multiple stylistic issues... the orchestral talent of Janel & Anthony is undeniable.”

- Massimo Ricci, *Touching Extremes*, April 12, 2012

“Where is Home’... might seem like an odd combination of instruments – not quite classical, not quite jazz and not quite fully electronic – but the resulting songs are often far more compelling... At its best, the pair creates a tranlike drone of electronics loops, then layers guitar or cello melodies on top. ‘Lily in the Garden’ features a strong and dramatic cello line, while leaving the overlapping, plucked melodies on ‘Leaving the Woods’ create some of the album’s most captivating moments. ‘Big Sur’ has a hypnotic Indian influence... commanding numbers... such as the slow-burning, dramatic ‘Broome Orchard,’ leave a lasting impression.”
- Catherine P. Lewis, *The Washington Post*, June 1, 2012

“Where is Home... is a deeply layered and atmospheric work touching on the musicians’ varied musical influences and interests, imbued with a sense of reflection and longing for – as Leppin has described it – ‘a new, deep-seated home.’”
- Dave Lynch, “Feature: Biography Janel & Anthony”, *All Music*

“The Avant-garde is Made Beautiful by This Washington D.C. Ambient Chamber Music Duo”

- John Diliberto, “Feature, John Diliberto, 2012: Janel & Anthony”, *The Echoes Blog*, 2012

“ALARM’S 50 Favorite Albums of 2012...we encountered way too much amazing music...”

Honorable Mentions Janel and Anthony: *Where Is Home* (Cuneiform, 5/22/2012)”

- Scott Morrow, “ALARM’s 50 Favorite Albums of 2012,” *Alarm*, December 13, 2012, www.alarmmagazine.com

“AMN Best of 2012 (So Far)... We are nearly half-way through 2012, and therefore it is a good time to revisit some of the best releases that have come to my attention so far... Honorable mentions: Janel & Anthony – Where Is Home.”

- Mike Borella, “AMN Best of 2012 (So Far)”, *Avant Music News* June 26, 2012, www.avantmusicnews.com

“D.C.’s best records of 2012: The Top 5... This year, the District’s jazz scene saw recordings from a number of outstanding musicians...Below you’ll find our five favorite albums from the past year... All five of these albums come highly recommended, and they say something extremely promising about the future of this town’s wide-reaching, fertile music scene. ...

#3: Janel & Anthony, *Where Is Home*

- Giovanni Russonello & Luke Stewart, “D.C.’s best records of 2012: The Top 5,” *Capital Bop*, December 20, 2012, www.capitalbop.com

“This year was a fantastic year for the local jazz scene. Here are some of my fave local albums, in no particular order: **Janel & Anthony: *Where is Home***” – Sriram Gopal, “DCist Staff List: Best Albums of 2012”, *DCist*, December 28, 2012 www.dcist.com

“...the best of what 2012 had to bare... Each of these releases weren’t afraid to experiment and take a few risks without any apologies. But, experimentation only goes so far here-most importantly, each album is solidly tightened up. **Janel and Anthony-*Where is Home***”

- Stephanie Williams, “Best Albums of 2012 Podcast”, *DC Music Download*, December 11, 2012, www.dcmusicdownload.com

“25 Essential Echoes CDs: The Best of 2012... These are the albums that the Echoes staff thought were the most significant releases of 2012 that were played on Echoes. ... **Janel & Anthony’s *Where is Home***: Sweet lyricism meets avant-garde explorations with this plugged-in duo of cello and guitar.”

- John Diliberto, “25 Essential Echoes CDs: The Best of 2012”, *The Echoes Blog*, December 27, 2012

“Lots of lists of top music picks of 2012 this time of year... The Pink Line Project reached out to some of our favorite members of the DC arts community to make our own entirely subjective list. ... **Paul Vodra of Hometown Sounds DC** made a podcast of his top ten releases by DC artists this year... Janel & Anthony – Where Is Home [A Viennesian Life] ... **Ben Azarra** has been around the DC music scene for many years and continues to play in local bands. ... “Where is Home” – Janel and Anthony”

- Dena Adams, “LISTEN & WATCH”, *The Pinkline Project*, December 18, 2012, www.pinklineproject.com

“S. Victor Aaron’s Top Albums for 2012, Part 4 of 4: Fusion Jazz... In the final piece of these exhaustive, four-part salutes to the top releases of 2012, the fusion jazz records are surveyed... Some of these are slotted “fusion” jazz because there isn’t any other place to put them: the two Cuneiform releases – Pixel and Janel & Anthony – are jazz in a broad sense but otherwise indescribable... **THE BEST OF THE REST:** ... Janel& Anthony – *Where is Home?*: This record should feel right at home for anyone who appreciates and enjoys experimental music that’s soothing and layered enough to reveal something new with each listen.”

- S. Victor Aaron, “S. Victor Aaron’s Top Albums for 2012, Part 4 of 4: Fusion Jazz”, *Something Else!*, December 10, 2012

“Janel and Anthony, Where is Home, Cuneiform, 2012... Honorable mention on list of the albums 2012.”

- *Sea of Tranquility* 2012

“...here are some... of the best local labels to keep your eyeball on... The deal: Steve and Joyce Feigenbaum’s nearly 30-year-old Silver Spring-based label favors experimental music across genres (and countries). Notable releases: Lo-fi pioneer R. Stevie Moore inaugurated the label in 1984 with his fourth LP, *What’s the Point*; more recently, Cuneiform put out local cello and guitar duo Janel and Anthony’s *Where Is Home*.”

- Ally Schweitzer, “Label Condition: A selective Overview of D.C. DIY Labels”, *Washington City Paper*, November 12, 2013