



Bio information: **CHICAGO / LONDON UNDERGROUND**

Title: **A NIGHT WALKING THROUGH MIRRORS** (Cuneiform Rune 428) Format: CD / DIGITAL

Cuneiform Promotion Dept: (301) 589-8894 / Fax (301) 589-1819

Press and world radio: joyce@cuneiformrecords.com | North American and world radio: radio@cuneiformrecords.com
www.cuneiformrecords.com

FILE UNDER: **JAZZ / EXPERIMENTAL / CREATIVE MUSIC**

**Celebrating 20 Years as Sonic and Spiritual Brothers,
Chicago Underground Duo-mates Rob Mazurek & Chad Taylor
Team with London Improvisers Alexander Hawkins and John Edwards
for the Exploratory, Boundlessly Inventive and Genre-Shattering
*A Night Walking Through Mirrors***

At a time when the world is mired in divisiveness, a time of wall-building and fear-mongering, of **Brexit** and **Trump**, it takes visionaries to build bridges rather than tear them down. “This is protest music,” insists Rob Mazurek. “It always has been. That’s why it’s called ‘**Underground**’ - it’s not just called that for fun. We really believe in it. The world has become so homogenized and leans so far towards the right, and this music expresses complete freedom and lack of borders. Our music is all about the obliteration of any kind of oppression, the tearing down of any kind of wall - freedom and equality, both sonically and spiritually.”

For the last two decades the **Chicago Underground Duo – Rob Mazurek** on cornet and electronics and **Chad Taylor** on percussion, electronics and mbira – have created music meant to open minds and explore alien territory.

Now, on *A Night Walking Through Mirrors*, they’ve created a new Transatlantic partnership in the form of **Chicago / London Underground**, inviting a pair of renowned British improvisers – pianist **Alexander Hawkins** and bassist **John Edwards** – into the creative fold. The result is an expansive sonic adventure where every unexpected note and alchemical reaction runs counter to the limited imaginations ruling social media name-calling and clannish provincialism.

A Night Walking Through Mirrors, released on **Cuneiform Records**, documents the first meeting of these four artists, recorded live at London’s **Café Oto** in April 2016, during a two-night run that marked the Chicago Underground Duo’s first performances in the city in a decade. To celebrate the occasion, Mazurek and Taylor invited two London-based artists with whom they’d never collaborated but they deeply admired to perform with the duo.

“We love their playing and thought they’d be a nice complement to what we do,” Mazurek explains. When it comes to the rare occasions when he and Taylor do bring other musicians into the fold, he continues, “The only criteria is people who are completely open to anything, no matter how outlandish or crazy the idea is. They just have to be 100 percent into the moment and what we’re doing.”

The London contingent of the Chicago / London Underground certainly fits those requirements. **Alexander Hawkins** is a pianist, organist, composer and bandleader whose highly distinctive soundworld is forged through the search to reconcile his love of free improvisation with his profound fascination with composition and structure. He’s recorded or performed with a vast array of contemporary leaders of all generations, including the likes of **Evan Parker**, **John Surman**, **Mulatu Astatke**, **Wadada Leo Smith**, **Anthony Braxton**, **Han Bennink**, **Taylor Ho Bynum** and **Matana Roberts**, and frequently performs in the bands of legendary South African drummer **Louis Moholo-Moholo**.

John Edwards is a true virtuoso whose staggering range of techniques and boundless musical imagination have redefined the possibility of the double bass and dramatically expanded its role, whether playing solo or with others. Perpetually in demand, he has played with **Evan Parker**, **Sunny Murray**, **Derek Bailey**, **Joe McPhee**, **Lol Coxhill**, **Peter Brötzmann**, **Mulatu Astatke** and many others.

“Alexander Hawkins is a very dynamic player,” Mazurek says. “His harmonic and melodic sense as well as his phrasing and his approach to playing, whether songs or free playing, are very interesting and wide-ranging. John Edwards plays the most amount of bass I’ve ever heard anybody play. He plays a lot but nothing is wasted; it all means so much. They could go anywhere, so it was just

[press release continued on verso]

a matter of being in the moment and letting the instincts roll. It was powerful, elegant, noisy, melodic, rhythmic, free - it had all the elements that usually come up when you think about making a complete and interesting set.”

Hawkins and Edwards are newcomers to one of Mazurek’s longest-running musical partnerships. The duo of Mazurek and Taylor stretches back more than 20 years to their work together in various iterations of the **Chicago Underground Collective**, founded by Mazurek and guitarist **Jeff Parker** at the famed Chicago nightclub, the **Green Mill**. Since spinning off from the collective in 1996, the Chicago Underground Duo has released seven remarkably creative recordings and expanded to form **Trio** and **Quartet** incarnations with the likes of Parker and bassists **Noel Kuper-Smith** and **Jason Ajemian**.

“We’re sonic and spiritual brothers,” Mazurek says of his profound partnership with Taylor. “It’s a special relationship, one of those cosmic things where it just works. It’s amazing that we’ve kept it going this long and hopefully we’ll continue for another 20 years.”

The critically acclaimed drummer and percussionist for the Chicago Underground ensembles, **Chad Taylor** has been featured in *Modern Drummer* magazine, performed at major rock and jazz festivals worldwide, and played with a wide range of artists on both the Chicago and New York rock and jazz scenes. He has a BA from the New School of Jazz, where he studied with **Joe Chambers**, **Yoron Israel**, **Pheeroan Aklaiff** and **Lewis Nash**, and a MA from Rutgers. Chad has performed on over 50 recordings and has worked with such artists as **Roscoe Mitchell**, **Tortoise**, **Jim O'Rourke**, **Charles Gayle**, **Derek Bailey**, **Jeff Parker**, **Marc Ribot**, **Mary Halvorson**, **Malachi Favors**, **Henry Grimes**, and **Cooper-Moore**.

Composer, improviser and multi-media artist **Rob Mazurek** has drawn inspiration from a multitude of audio and visual styles and sources over the past three decades. Augmenting his cornet playing with computer programming, electronics and an assortment of keyboards, Mazurek’s broad electro-acoustic palette defies simple categorization. His visionary work is garnering ever-increasing critical acclaim and public attention; in recent years, he appeared on the cover of *The Wire* magazine and was voted **MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR** by Italy’s top jazz magazine, *Musica Jazz*. When not touring the world with various groups, Mazurek now lives in Marfa, TX, after having relocated back to Chicago following an extended stay in São Paulo, Brazil. In addition to Chicago Underground Duo and new Chicago / London Underground, he leads, collaborates with and composes for a wide variety of ongoing ensembles, among them **Pharoah & The Underground** (featuring **Pharoah Sanders**) and **Black Cube SP**. His three-piece **São Paulo Underground** transplants the collaborative and boundary-bursting Underground model onto a Chicago/Brazil axis, combining Brazilian influences from samba to maracatu with the interstellar jazz consciousness of the **Sun Ra Arkestra** and Mazurek’s own large ensemble, **Exploding Star Orchestra**.

It’s hard enough to categorize all that transpires within the confines of a single **Underground** piece, let alone trying to delineate a single unifying thread that binds the various iterations together. What does distinguish all of the ensembles’ work, including this latest Chicago / London variation, is their fearlessness, a willingness, even eagerness, to venture into the unknown and find the spark of the new.

“Anything is possible,” Mazurek states simply. “Whatever direction in which things go, no matter how outlandish - or the opposite of that, no matter how much it makes sense – we trust each other, and that trust is integral to why this group works in all its different formats.”

That trust, despite the novelty of never having played together before, is evident from the opening moments of this recording. “**A Night Spent Walking Through Mirrors**” begins with abrupt smears of sound from Mazurek’s cornet, which conjure sparse replies from Taylor’s mbira and Hawkins’ piano. Over the course of the next 20 minutes, the interplay builds in chaotic intensity until the ground seems to fall away and leave the listener adrift in a gauzy haze. Jittery explosions burst in, from which emerges Mazurek’s voice intoning a sort of primal chant.

Voice has become increasingly important to Mazurek’s work in recent years, and recurs throughout *A Night Walking Through Mirrors*, as when he urgently pleads the mantra-like title phrase of “Something Must Happen,” making literal the desperate crises underlying the album’s political urgency. “Voice is about breaking down barriers, breaking down walls, breaking down inhibition,” Mazurek says. “I want to use it more and more for my own possibilities.”

“**Something Must Happen**” is notable for its perpetual, agitated tumult, with aggressive electronic bursts engulfing Hawkins’ frenetic piano, which finally relents in the closing minutes to dissipate in a shimmering curtain of sound.

“**Boss Redux**” is a reimagining of a piece from the 2014 Chicago Underground Duo release *Locus*, beginning with the original’s infectious electronic groove and breakbeat rhythms before smashing those elements apart and refracting them into an abstracted landscape. Edwards’ creaking strings and resonant, percussive tones seem to guide the listener through a dense, mysterious jungle of startling voices, only to come out – in what may be the album’s most unexpected moment – in an intimate interpolation of the jazz standard “**It Might As Well Be Spring**.”

Finally, “**Mysteries of Emanating Light**” grows from a bold Taylor improvisation, first spawning a knotty turn from Edwards in which he almost seems to be wrestling his strings into gnarled, craggy shapes, until Mazurek and Taylor engage in a captivating

mbira/cornet duo. Mazurek's voice returns, this time echoing and distorting as Edwards and Hawkins parry the ricocheting sounds. It all ends in dissolving calm, an ambiguous but thoughtful moment of leave-taking.

The album's title, *A Night Walking Through Mirrors*, is an evocative fit for this exploratory set, capturing the sense of alluring disorientation, of sympathetic worlds upon worlds echoing into infinity. "It really felt like we would be playing and somebody would take a left turn and we'd be in another dimension," Mazurek recalls. "Another person would take a right turn and we'd be in yet another dimension, but everybody was right there. It really did feel like a night spent walking through mirrors in that respect."

For more information on Chicago / London Underground:
www.robmazurek.com - www.cuneiformrecords.com

WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT CHICAGO UNDERGROUND DUO

"Atmospheric, exploratory music that creates worlds as it progresses." — **BBC**

"Mazurek is a player of great poise and elegance, while Taylor's deftness, imagination and formidable technical skill make his playing a joy to listen to...from the densest meshes to the sparsest near silent passage, each sonic cypher, beat and note seem to be leading somewhere, to have been made with a purpose." — **The Wire**

"Following the work of Mazurek and Taylor remains a near-requirement for those invested in modern creative music."
— **Tiny Mix Tapes**

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

Digital [High-Resolution] images are available on the *Chicago / London Underground* artist page @ www.cuneiformrecords.com

