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Bio information: **THUMBSCREW**

Title: **MULTICOLORED MIDNIGHT** (Cuneiform Rune 485)

Format: CD / VINYL / DIGITAL

www.cuneiformrecords.com

FILE UNDER: **JAZZ**

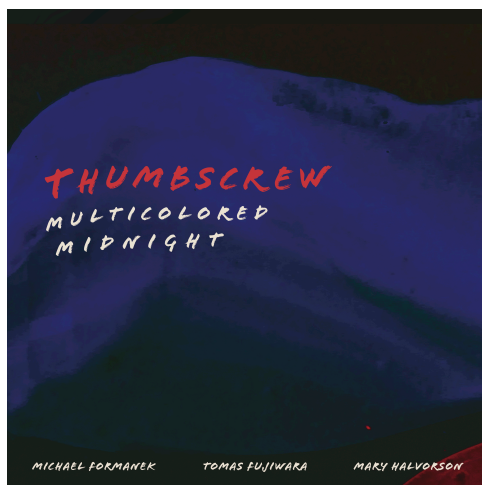


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**The Core of a Spiraling Musical Universe,
the All-Star Collective Trio
THUMBSCREW
Marks a Spectacularly Vivid Decade
by Adding New Instrumental Hues on
MULTICOLORED MIDNIGHT,
featuring Bassist **MICHAEL FORMANEK**,
Drummer/Vibraphonist **TOMAS FUJIWARA**
and Guitarist **MARY HALVORSON**.**



At the center of a spiraling musical universe, **Thumbscrew** is like a reverse black hole radiating brilliant constellations of overlapping ensembles. The all-star trio is at the core, and they're marking their 10th year as a collective endeavor – 2022 – looking ahead to new sonic territory rather than taking stock of a prodigiously creative decade. Celebrating this anniversary, *Multicolored Midnight*, the group's seventh album for **Cuneiform Records**, is slated for release September 30, 2022. It features bassist **Michael Formanek**, drummer/vibraphonist **Tomas Fujiwara**, and guitarist **Mary Halvorson** on a set of 11 original pieces that oscillate between detailed composition, unbridled improvisation, and every gradation in between. It's another step on an extraordinary journey by three of jazz's most dauntless and resourceful artists.

The focus that each player brings to Thumbscrew and the dense web of experience they share is part of what makes the ensemble so extraordinary. Thumbscrew's ongoing evolution is powered by a super-charged matrix of relationships, as all of the players also lead critically acclaimed bands built on the trio's thrumming creative synergy. Beyond their work as a trio they're the foundation for Formanek's **Ensemble Kolossus**, the hair-raising and ridiculously talent-laden large ensemble that released its 2016 debut on **ECM** *The Distance*. Formanek joined Halvorson on **Tomas Fujiwara & The Hook Up**'s third release, the critically hailed 2015 album *After All Is Said* (**482 Music**). And Halvorson's Thumbscrew

bandmates are the foundation of her song-based band **Code Girl**. For Halvorson, Thumbscrew has become an invaluable creative foundation. “It’s one of my favorite rhythm sections to be a part of, the power and energy and everything we create together,” she said. “At this point, all of us have used this rhythm section as leaders.”

Multicolored Midnight features music that Thumbscrew honed during a three-week residency at **City of Asylum**, a **Pittsburgh** program founded as a refuge for writers in exile. Since expanding its purview to include musicians, City of Asylum has become the fourth wheel powering Thumbscrew’s all-terrain evolution as the triumvirate fully utilizes the sequestration to generate and refine new pieces. Three of Thumbscrew’s prior albums had also been generated at City of Asylum. *Multicolored Midnight* grew out of the group’s fourth residency in August of 2021, which provided a welcome respite from the sudden and unnerving isolation imposed by the pandemic.

If there was an agenda for *Multicolored Midnight*, it centered on fully incorporating Fujiwara’s vibraphone work into the mix, a bright hue that surfaced briefly on Thumbscrew’s 2020 celebration of **Anthony Braxton**’s 75th birthday, ***The Anthony Braxton Project***. Marking a decade doesn’t have quite the same panache as a diamond jubilee, “but we do feel like it’s a big deal,” Formanek said. “That’s a lot of time for a cooperative band, and the residencies are a big part of what’s allowed us to dive in deeper and keep creating new music.”

The album opens with the tightly constructed “**I’m A Senator!**,” one of five tunes that Formanek contributed to the project. It’s a wicked little groove that features some sharp Halvorson chordal work sandwiching her vertiginous bottom-falling-out single note runs. The bassist built “**Shit Changes**” on Fujiwara’s vibes ostinato, which feeds the mysterious, slowly blossoming melody. Mutations occur but the bloom is hardy. Formanek draws on many sources when it comes to titling his tunes, often settling on a word or phrase that has little direct connection to the piece. And then there’s “**Fidgety**,” which captures an anxious, unsettled mood from the opening bass solo, which Formanek bends and contours with some deft electronic processing. It’s his first use of electronics on double bass in Thumbscrew, adding another sonic resource to the growing palette. He’s at his most tuneful on “**Capsicum Annum**,” a song-like tune that builds to a brief thrashing passage before the trio returns to the alluring melody. The intriguing line references the forward-and-backward phrase ideas that Formanek has explored elsewhere in a series of palindromic tunes.

Fujiwara brought three tunes to the program, including “**Song For Mr. Humphries**,” a tribute to Pittsburgh drum maestro **Roger Humphries**, the well-traveled veteran who played on **Horace Silver**’s 1965 classic ***Song For My Father***. Propelled by a quirky, vaulting bassline, the tune grows more intricate and less rhythmically stable as it progresses. It isn’t based on anything that Humphries plays. Rather, it’s a thank you for his generosity and ongoing contributions to the music. He actually lives a few blocks from City of Asylum and on Thumbscrew’s first residency City of Asylum co-founders **Diane Samuels** and **Henry Reese** made a point of mentioning him. “He still plays around town all the time,” Fujiwara said. “We went and checked him out and his feel and sound is amazing, so classic and specific. Every time I go to Pittsburgh I hear him play and I go to his house for a lesson and a hang.”

The pandemic experience doesn’t surface directly on the album often, though Fujiwara’s “**Future Reruns and Nostalgia**” evokes the prickly, surreal suspension of time that marked the first months of sheltering in place. The chiming notes on the vibes that open the piece seem to toll for all of us as Formanek’s squally arco bass work ratchets up the pressure. The melody ascends and hangs in the air. Halvorson also contributed three pieces to *Multicolored Midnight*, including the title track, a stuttery tune with an almost folk-song like theme driven by her strummed chords. An improviser and composer of dry and poker-faced wit, she builds a repeating figure into the angular melody that was inspired by the sound of a skipping LP. On “**Swirling Lives**” she creates an almost chamber jazz setting for Fujiwara’s vibes. There’s a melodic line running through the tune that’s carried by all three players at different points and as the pace accelerates to a sprint the chamber piece takes on the feel of a frantic game of hide and seek. Playful, mischievous and insistently present tense, this is music that illuminates each moment’s vast possibilities.

An album laden with fully realized connections and reflections, *Multicolored Midnight* also provides tantalizing hints regarding Thumbscrew’s future explorations. Integrating new textures, sounds and concepts, Thumbscrew has turned into an essential all-terrain vehicle for three of improvised music’s most venturesome artists. After a decade of coaxing and inspiring each other, the trio’s musical universe just keeps expanding, and *Multicolored Midnight* sheds dazzling light on where they’ll be heading next.

THUMBSCREW BIO INFORMATION

for more info:

thumbscrew.net - facebook.com/thumbscrew - twitter.com/ithumbscrew

Thumbscrew's first gig as a collective trio was on March 11, 2012. Since then, the all-star trio has been in high demand for performances at Jazz and New Music festivals worldwide. They have played at such North American festivals as the **Vancouver Jazz Festival**, **Monterey Jazz Festival**, **Atlanta Jazz Festival**, **Philadelphia's Center City Jazz Festival**, and the wildly popular beyond-genre **Big Ears Festival**. Thumbscrew has also played numerous festivals overseas, touring Europe and the Middle East. In addition, they've played at and/or served residencies at numerous high-profile venues worldwide, including the **Village Vanguard** (NYC), **Walker Arts Center** (Minneapolis), **Blues Alley** (Washington DC), and many more. Featuring the trio's masterful and near-intuitive interplay, consummate level of skill, distinctive compositions, and joie de vivre onstage, Thumbscrew's live shows have become legendary, instilling audiences with awe and generating positive reviews in the music press.

Thumbscrew's recorded music has likewise received worldwide acclaim. Counting its newest release, *Multicolored Midnight*, the band has released seven albums since 2014, all on **Cuneiform Records**. These albums received an impressive amount of press worldwide, including numerous 4-star reviews and/or spotlights in *DownBeat* and other jazz magazines, in addition to being named in numerous **Best Jazz Albums of Year** lists globally. In addition, the Thumbscrew trio and its individual members have been cited in various **Best of Year lists for Musicians, Rising Star Artists, and Rising Star Ensembles**.

A decade into its existence as a band, Thumbscrew has compiled an impressive, rock-solid legacy. The stellar artists of this unique cooperative look forward to building further on this strong foundation, launching new sonic journeys for Thumbscrew as well as utilizing the trio as the rhythmic heart in many of their individual large ensembles.

TOMAS FUJIWARA

more info: <https://www.tomasfujiwara.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/tomas.fujiwara> <https://twitter.com/TomasFujiwara>

Based in Brooklyn, Fujiwara has also earned renown as a composer and bandleader who performs and records with some of the most exciting musicians of the current generation. He's been described by *Point of Departure* as "a ubiquitous presence in the New York scene...an artist whose urbane writing is equal to his impressively nuanced drumming." He leads and composes for a number of ensembles, including **Tomas Fujiwara's Triple Double** (with Halvorson, **Taylor Ho Bynum**, **Ralph Alessi**, **Brandon Seabrook**, and **Gerald Cleaver**), and **Tomas Fujiwara's 7 Poets Trio** (with **Patricia Brennan** and **Tomeka Reid**), which released its eponymous debut in 2019 on the **Rogue Art** label. **Tomas Fujiwara & The Hook Up** (with Halvorson, **Jonathan Finlayson**, and **Brian Settles**) released three albums on the **482** label, including *Actionspeak* (2010, with bassist **Danton Boller**), *The Air Is Different* (2012, with bassist **Trevor Dunn**), and *After All Is Said* (2015, with **Formanek**). He's also released *Variable Bets* (2014, **Relative Pitch**) featuring the **Tomas Fujiwara Trio with Ralph Alessi and Brandon Seabrook**. His collaborative duo with **Taylor Ho Bynum** has released three albums, *True Events* (2007, **482 Music**), *Stepwise* (2010, **NotTwo Records**), and *Through Foundation* (2014, self-released).

Fujiwara engages in a diversity of creative work with **Anthony Braxton**, **John Zorn**, **Matana Roberts**, **Joe Morris**, **Nicole Mitchell**, **Ben Goldberg**, **Tomeka Reid**, **Amir ElSaffar**, **Benoit Delbecq**, and many others. In 2021, he won the **Downbeat Critics Poll for Rising Star Drummer**, and premiered two suites of new music as part of his **Roulette Residency**: "**You Don't Have to Try**" (with **Meshell Ndegeocello**) and "**Shizuko**," a suite dedicated to his grandmother, featuring **Taylor Ho Bynum**, **Tomeka Reid**, **Rafiq Bhatia**, and **Davi Vieira**. In a *New York Times* profile, the paper described Fujiwara's expansive musical parameters, noting that he "works with rhythm as a pliable substance, solid but ever shifting. His style is forward-driving but rarely blunt or aggressive, and never random. He has a way of spreading out the center of a pulse while setting up a rigorous scaffolding of restraint...A conception of the drum set as a full-canvas instrument, almost orchestral in its scope."

MARY HALVORSON

more info: <https://www.maryhalvorson.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/maryhalvorsonmusic>

Based like Fujiwara in Brooklyn, Halvorson has been described by *JazzTimes* as "a singular talent," and by the *Wall Street Journal* as "one of the most exciting and original guitarists in jazz—or otherwise." In recent **DownBeat Critics Polls** Halvorson has been celebrated as **Guitarist**, **Rising Star Jazz artist**, and **Rising Star Composer of the year**, and in 2019 she was awarded a **MacArthur Fellowship**. One of New York City's most in-demand guitarists, over the past decade Halvorson has worked with such diverse musicians as **Tim Berne**, **Taylor Ho Bynum**, **John Dieterich**, **Trevor Dunn**, **Bill Frisell**, **Ingrid Laubrock**, **Jason Moran**, **Joe Morris**, **Tom Rainey**, **Jessica Pavone**, **Tomeka Reid**, **Marc Ribot** and **John Zorn**. She's released a series of critically acclaimed albums on the **Firehouse 12** label, starting with

2008's *Dragon's Head*, her trio debut featuring bassist **John Hébert** and drummer **Ches Smith**. The group expanded to a quintet with trumpeter **Jonathan Finlayson** and alto saxophonist **Jon Irabagon** on 2010's *Saturn Sings* and 2012's *Bending Bridges*, a septet with tenor saxophonist **Ingrid Laubrock** and trombonist **Jacob Garchik** on 2014's *Illusionary Sea*, and finally an octet with pedal steel guitarist **Susan Alcorn** on 2016's *Away With You*. Her acclaimed 2018 and 2020 albums with her band **Code Girl**, which feature her original lyrics based around poetic forms, deployed a rhythm section of Formanek and Fujiwara. Most recently she released a double debut on **Nonesuch** with the interlocking pair of records *Amaryllis* and *Belladonna*. The former features a new sextet with Fujiwara, vibraphonist **Patricia Brennan**, bassist **Nick Dunston**, trombonist **Jacob Garchik**, and trumpeter **Adam O'Farrill** (augmented by the **Mivos** string quartet on the album's second side). On *Belladonna*, Halvorson wrote solely for guitar and Mivos.

MICHAEL FORMANEK more info: <http://www.michaelformanek.com/> <https://twitter.com/michaelformanek>
<https://www.facebook.com/michaelformanekgroups>

Michael Formanek's been described as "a bold and unclassifiable bassist and composer," while *The New York Times* has noted that his music is always "graceful in its subversions, often even sumptuous." Whether it's for a small band or a large ensemble, he creates modern jazz that is earthy yet atmospheric, always alive with dark-hued melody and bone-deep rhythms, rich in dynamic possibility and the sound of surprise. Even with decades of experience to his credit – he got his start as a Bay Area teenager playing with the likes of **Joe Henderson** and **Tony Williams** – Formanek has made some of his keenest creative leaps in recent years, documented on a sequence of justly lauded recordings.

Formanek's three **ECM** albums as a leader each scored rare five-star reviews in *DownBeat*. These included two discs – *Small Places* (2012) and *The Rub and Spare Change* (2010) – featuring a powerhouse quartet with saxophonist **Tim Berne**, pianist **Craig Taborn** and drummer **Gerald Cleaver**; the third was a magnificent record – *The Distance* (2016) – that showcased his compositions for an all-star big band, playfully dubbed **Ensemble Kolossus**. Formanek's first album for the **Intakt** label, *Time Like This* (2018), saw him leading his new **Elusion Quartet** with saxophonist **Tony Malaby**, pianist **Kris Davis** and drummer **Ches Smith** to "soul-stirring" effect, according to *All About Jazz*. In 2019, the Swiss label **Intakt Records** released Formanek's *Even Better* by his **Very Practical Trio** featuring Halvorson and altoist **Tim Berne**. He recently launched his own label, **Circular File Records**, with *Were We Where We Were* by the **Michael Formanek Drome Trio** with **Chet Doxas** and **Vinnie Sperrazza**.

Born in San Francisco in 1958, **Formanek** has performed in myriad contexts over the decades, including with masters from **Gerry Mulligan** and **Stan Getz** to **Freddie Hubbard** and **Fred Hersch**. Among his peers, the bassist has collaborated closely with **Tim Berne**, making a duo album with the saxophonist (*Ornery People*) and performing extensively in Berne's iconic **Bloodcount** band in the '90s. Formanek also released a solo LP – *Am I Bothering You?* – via Berne's **Screwgun** label in 1998. Formanek's early recordings as a leader included a string of quartet and septet releases for **Enja** from 1990 to 1996. As a sideman, he has recorded with **Uri Caine**, **Dave Burrell**, **Jane Ira Bloom**, **Gary Thomas**, **Jack Walrath**, **Harold Danko**, **Lee Konitz**, **Freddie Redd**, **Art Pepper**, **Chet Baker** and even **Elvis Costello**, along with appearing on albums by frequent partners such as Halvorson and Fujiwara, Berne, Malaby, multi-reedist **Marty Ehrlich**, trumpeter **Dave Ballou**, saxophonist **Ellery Eskelin**, drummer **Devin Gray** and pianist **Angelica Sanchez**. From 2001 to 2018, Formanek taught jazz bass and jazz history and directed large and small ensembles at the **Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University** in Baltimore. Currently based in the **New York** metropolitan area, he continues to teach, mainly giving workshops and masterclasses in universities and music schools worldwide.

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Besides their work as the **Thumbscrew** trio, and their appearance in large ensembles that each of them lead, **Thumbscrew**'s members have played together in various formulations led by others. Halvorson and Fujiwara had first started playing together in cornetist **Taylor Ho Bynum's Sextet**. Among other bands, they also work together in Halvorson's **Reverse Blue** (with **Chris Speed** and **Eivind Opsvik**), the collective **Illegal Crowns** (with Bynum and **Benoît Delbecq**), and **Mike Reed's** fascinating **Sun Ra**-inspired ensemble **Living By Lanterns**, which released the acclaimed 2012 Cuneiform album *Old Myth, New Science*. They also join forces on cellist **Tomeka Reid's** debut album *Tomeka Reid Quartet* (**Thirsty Ear**) and her Cuneiform follow up *Old New*, and with clarinetist **Ben Goldberg** on *The Out Louds* (**Relative Pitch Records**), a collective trio featuring their live-wire connection in a free improv setting. More recently, Halvorson joined Bynum, **Gerald Cleaver**, **Brandon Seabrook** and **Ralph Alessi** on Fujiwara's acclaimed 2017 album *Triple Double* and 2022's *March*, featuring the same group on the same label (**Firehouse 12 Records**). Halvorson and Formanek both play in **Michael Formanek's Very Practical Trio** and the **Susan Alcorn Quintet**, while Formanek and Fujiwara are part of the **Marty Ehrlich Trio**. All three of the **Thumbscrew** members are part of the **Ben Goldberg Quintet**. Such extensive experience of working together in various combinations and diverse contexts serves to enhance Formanek, Fujiwara and Halvorson's understanding of each other as players, and enrich their intuitive collaboration as **Thumbscrew**.



## THUMBSCREW PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

Please credit photographer **Brian Cohen**.

Digital [High-Resolution] versions of these images are available on the [Thumbscrew artist page @ cuneiformrecords.com](https://cuneiformrecords.com/thumbscrew)



## THUMBSCREW UPCOMING CONCERTS – 2022

### U.S.A

September 24 - tba - East Hampton, NY

### EUROPEAN TOUR

October 12 - [Open Music Graz](#) - Tube's - Grieskai 74a - Graz, Austria

October 14 - [Handelsbeurs Concertzaal](#) - Kouter 29 - Gent, Belgium

October 16 - October 16 - [Skopje Jazz Fest](#) - Skopje, North Macedonia

October 19 - [JazzClub Singen](#) - Singen, Germany

October 21 - [Controtempo](#) - Cormons, Italy

October 22 - [Jazz Club Ferrara](#) - Ferrara, Italy

### U.S.A.

November - tentative Midwest tour

November 11 - [Jazz Gallery](#) - 1160 Broadway (at 27th St), 5th Floor - NYC, NY [record release show!]

November 12 - [Jazz Gallery](#) - 1160 Broadway (at 27th St), 5th Floor - NYC, NY [record release show!]

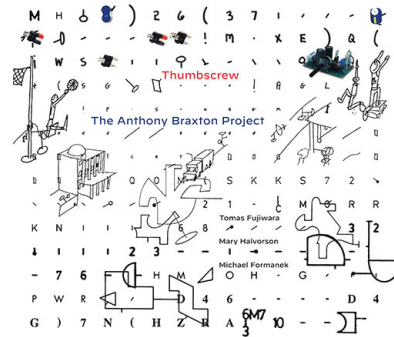
# Thumbscrew Recordings on Cuneiform Records

more info:

<http://www.cuneiformrecords.com/bandshtml/thumbscrew.html>



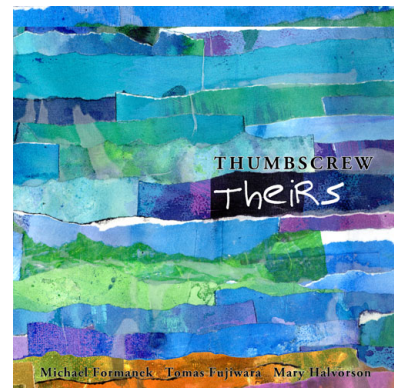
***Never Is Enough***  
(Cuneiform Records – Rune 478)  
2021



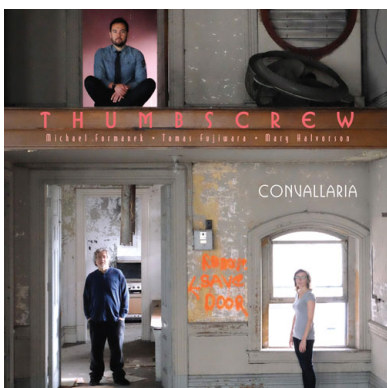
***The Anthony Braxton Project***  
(Cuneiform Records – Rune 475)  
2020



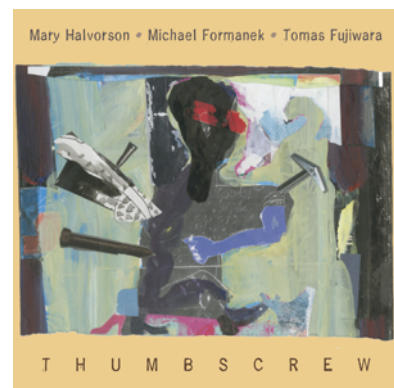
***Ours***  
(Cuneiform Records – Rune 439)  
2018



***Theirs***  
(Cuneiform Records – Rune 441)  
2018



***Convallaria***  
(Cuneiform Records – Rune 415)  
2016



***Thumbscrew***  
(Cuneiform Records – Rune 365)  
2014