



Bio information: **THE CELLAR AND POINT**

Title: **AMBIT** (Cuneiform Rune 376) Format: CD / DIGITAL

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www.cuneiformrecords.com **FILE UNDER: JAZZ / CLASSICAL / GARAGE-CHAMBER / CHAMBER ROCK / AVANT-PROGRESSIVE**

**Adventurous NYC “Garage-Chamber” Septet
THE CELLAR AND POINT,
Merge Jazz, Classical and Rock Elements & Instruments on *AMBIT*,
Creating A Refreshing, 21st Century, Jazz-Infused Take on Chamber Rock**

**Co-Led by Joseph Branciforte (Producer for Tim Berne, Ben Monder, Vijay Iyer & Nels Cline)
and Christopher Botta, THE CELLAR AND POINT Features Members of
Cutting-Edge Contemporary Classical Ensembles JACK Quartet, Mivos Quartet, TRANSIT, Signal Ensemble**

Drummer/producer **Joseph Branciforte** and guitarist **Christopher Botta** had long imagined a fluid synthesis of their wide-ranging musical interests. The detail of modern concert music; the improvisational sensibilities of downtown jazz; the emotional directness of alt-rock. The production value and formal concision of pop, the head-nodding grooves of hip-hop and electronica, the immersive sonics of ambient music. Might it be possible to draw equally upon these influences, while transcending mere collage? How could these manifold musical experiences be distilled into a personal, unified aesthetic? And could this music be presented in the context of a working ensemble - not just a studio project - but a band?

THE CELLAR AND POINT is one possible answer to those questions. After 3 years spent crafting their **debut record**, the “garage-chamber” septet will release **AMBIT** on **Cuneiform Records** this fall. *Time Out New York* has described the ensemble's sound as “ethereal chamber-prog” and lauded their live performance as “brainy, yet highly engaging.” *The New York Times* has taken note of “the chamberlike enterprise of a productive partnership, of the percussionist Joseph Branciforte and the guitarist Christopher Botta.” But **AMBIT**, which features seven Branciforte/Botta originals, plus arrangements of composers György Ligeti and Anton Webern, marks the group's first complete musical statement.

Hometown friends from Ramsey, NJ, Branciforte and Botta grew up making music together: from their middle-school days of **Rage Against the Machine** covers and high school explorations of jazz improvisation, to their formal studies of classical and contemporary composition, electronic music, and record production at Berklee College of Music. “We absorbed a lot of the same music at the same time,” says Branciforte. “From **Autechre** to **Morton Feldman** to **Wu-Tang Clan** to **J.S. Bach** – there was a lot of time spent listening, discussing, analyzing.”

The two eventually moved back to New York and, after several years of composing and creating demos of new material, **THE CELLAR AND POINT** took shape. The pair began recruiting an impressive cross-section of young talent from New York City's classical, jazz, and new music scenes to bring their vision to life.

Multi-percussionist **Joe Bergen**, founding member of **Mantra Percussion** and **TRANSIT**, was enlisted on vibraphone. “We knew we wanted to build the group around a distinctive melodic voice – but also something not too indicative of any particular genre,” says Botta. On **White Cylinder**, a 9.5-minute, drum'n'bass influenced *tour de force*, Bergen navigates syncopated, angular lines with mechanical precision. On “**Étude XV**,” he reveals a more ethereal approach, delicately teasing out the voices in an arrangement of **Ligeti's** late piano etude.

Violinist **Christopher Otto** and cellist **Kevin McFarland**, members of the internationally acclaimed **JACK Quartet**, were also early additions to the group. Otto and McFarland command a variety of orchestrational effects: from machine-gun pizzicato runs and webs of rhythmically-complex counterpoint to extended techniques honed from years of **Xenakis** and **Lachenmann**. On “**Ruminant**,” they improvised multiple layers of spectral effects atop their basic string parts, later edited by Branciforte to form a dense sonic tapestry.

Guitarist **Terrence McManus**, known for his work with forward-thinking jazz musicians **Gerry Hemmingway**, **Ellery Eskelin**, and **Tyshawn Sorey**, not only had the requisite skills to execute the technically-demanding electric guitar parts, but also brought an improvisational x-factor that helped breathe new life into the meticulously notated music. “**Tabletop (a)**” features a scintillating McManus solo, while “**Tabletop (b)**” finds him enhancing the group texture with Frisell-like chordal swells and loops.

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In early 2011, after a year of performance-testing and polishing, THE CELLAR AND POINT entered the studio. Branciforte and Botta handled engineering duties, with Branciforte additionally acting as producer. “We knew from the start that we wanted to engineer, produce, and mix the record ourselves,” he says. “There has always been something appealing about the DIY recording ethos of someone like **Sufjan Stevens**, where a homegrown approach to recording seems to amplify the idiosyncratic qualities of the music.”

In late 2011, Branciforte and Botta traveled to Los Angeles to work with studio bassist **Rufus Philpot**. Philpot's playing on *AMBIT* strikes a balance between providing a rich bottom-end foundation and taking an active melodic and textural role. On “**Purple Octagon**” Philpot switches to fretless bass and, along with Branciforte's propulsive brushwork, helps set up a infectious, driving groove.

Over the course of 2012 and 2013, the record proceeded in stops and starts. Branciforte soon became busy producing and engineering another epic recording, **Ben Monder's Hydra** (Sunnyside, 2013), as well as recordings for **Tim Berne**, **Mark Dresser**, **Michael Attias**, **Ingrid Laubrock**, and **Matt Mitchell**. He and Botta continued to supplement the basic tracks at their Brooklyn post-production studio – Branciforte laying down piano, Moog bass, glockenspiel, percussion, and drum loops, with Botta adding banjo and guitar loops. Finally, by the end of 2013, a finished product began to emerge.

The record was mixed and mastered by Branciforte in early 2014. But not before adding one final piece. The title track, “**Ambit**,” which acts as a coda to the album, was actually the result of a technical error.

“The original version of “**Ambit**” was around 7 minutes long. It was certainly one of the tunes we had spent the most time working on, although we were never quite satisfied with it. One day during recording, there was a sudden sample-rate error that ended up glitching the playback to around half the piece's original speed. After a few minutes of sitting there and listening, Chris and I both looked at each other and said, half-jokingly: ‘maybe we should just use this instead?’”

The pair ended up treating the clocking error as the inspiration for the final album version, re-conceiving the piece from the ground-up. “It seemed strangely emblematic of the entire project: identifying and striving towards an ideal, reaching the limits of intentionality or control - and then recognizing a new way to proceed through some serendipitous element or event,” says Branciforte. “There truly would have been no other way to arrive at this result without going through the entire process.”

For more information on the cellar and point, please visit:

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PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

Digital [High-Resolution] versions of these images are available for download on the Dylan Ryan / Sand artist page @ www.cuneiformrecords.com

