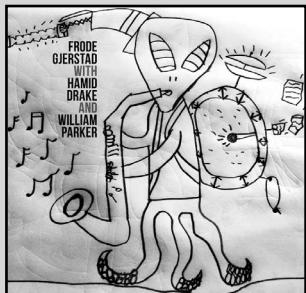


## BOXED SET



With Hamid Drake and William Parker  
Frode Gjerstad (Not Two)  
by Anders Griffen

This four-CD set is a complete and chronological compilation of Norwegian saxophonist Frode Gjerstad's previously released recordings in trio with bassist William Parker and percussionist Hamid Drake. Gjerstad, a prolific artist since the late '70s, will turn 70 years old on Mar. 24th and has performed with heavyweights of improvised music such as Bobby Bradford, Alvin Fielder, Louis Moholo, Derek Bailey, Billy Bang, Peter Brötzmann, Borah Bergman and Han Bennink, among many others.

However, he may be best known for his band Detail with British drummer John Stevens and bassist Johnny Mbizo Dyani until the latter's untimely death in 1986. "For me this trio is the present day Detail," Gjerstad said of this group with Parker and Drake in an interview with Vittorio LoConte. "The basic thing we did in Detail is still with us in the new trio: playing with rhythms, turning them around, crossing over them and just

letting them go. It's fun. It's energy and passion."

This music is completely improvised, but not a freak-out. It has a vibrant, simmering energy. The trio is not in a terrible hurry to get somewhere; they're enthusiastic about being here, which produces a current and they discover a lot of places along the way. That is largely what this music is about: searching with sound and feeling and making decisions in real time. Like traditional jazz, this is a cooperative effort and listeners are encouraged to go along for the ride. They arrive at some truly compelling and enveloping themes, creating a setting where they can be free.

The first two discs consist of the live albums *Ultima* and *Remember To Forget*, which were recorded on consecutive days, October 7th and 8th, on tour in Norway in 1997. The former gets its name from the contemporary music festival in Oslo where this performance took place. On the original Cadence CD released in 1999, *Ultima* was a single track, 58:33 in length. On this set, it is divided into four parts, but the music is continuous. *Remember To Forget*, recorded at Café Sting in Stavanger, gets a similar treatment: originally released as two pieces, "Remember" and "Forget", these have now been divided into three parts each.

On both discs the track number usually changes after or during a bass or drum solo, the next track tending to start as the trio reassembles, but sometimes the new 'part' seems to come at an arbitrary time. On the first two discs Parker and Drake take unaccompanied solos and spend time as a duo, whereas Gjerstad only plays in a trio setting. This is addressed on the third disc, which took place almost three years later. On *The Other Side* (recorded

in 2000 and originally released by Ayler Records in 2006), they explore different combinations: "Duo" consists of saxophone and bass and "The Other Duo" is saxophone and drums. These combinations lead to a greater range of outcomes.

The sense of space significantly affects how this music is perceived. The first disc sounds like it is in a large, open space, perhaps outdoors, while Disc 2, from a smaller club, is a little more immediate and intense. Discs 3 and 4 are studio recordings (the latter recorded in 2006 and released as *On Reade Street* by FMR in 2008) and listeners can feel the loss of the live audience. The music still has vitality and drive, but the studio sessions after the live dates highlight how an audience is part of an exchange in performance.

Parker and Drake have broad musical palettes from which to draw. The former makes occasional use of an ostinato, which sometimes yields fantastic results, and the pair can hit some hard grooves. Parker also gets a great range of timbre and between he and Gjerstad there are moments where it is not immediately apparent who is producing a sound.

Gjerstad plays alto saxophone almost throughout (we hear clarinet on Disc 4) and while comparisons to Ornette Coleman or Jimmy Lyons may be inevitable, Gjerstad is a different player with his own voice and his own journey. Because this set compiles the work of this trio over the course of almost nine years, listeners can start to recognize that voice and understand part of the journey. This is a nice package with illuminating notes from the leader and highly engaging music.

For more information, visit [nottwo.com](http://nottwo.com). William Parker and Hamid Drake are at Roulette Mar. 13th. See Calendar.

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