

Phish release catches improvisational feel

The groove-based band incorporates funk jams with its old jazz and rock themes in the new album 'The Story of the Ghost'

By Amy Goldhammer
for the Emerald

The band that can bring hundreds of thousands of fans to the tip of Maine for a three-day festival of camping, arts and music has successfully produced an album out of a four-day improvisational jam.

Phish has broken new ground with its most recent album, "The Story of the Ghost," which was released Oct. 27. The band uses the album to display many of the different musical styles it is known for: improvisation and spontaneity.

Jon Fishman's inventive and solid drum beats, Trey Anastasio's technically dazzling guitar, Mike Gordon's deep, powerful bass grooves and Page McConnell's use of piano, organ, synthesizer and clavinet combine to create the unique, funky sounds of Phish. Each member contributes equally on this album, both vocally and instrumentally.

"We've been after getting to a process where by

the music that ends up on our albums is fresh and spontaneous," guitarist Trey Anastasio said in a press release. "What you're hearing on 'The Story of the Ghost' is first takes, first creations, first everything."

"The Story of the Ghost" combines Phish's recent transition into deep funk jams with their more traditional style of jazz and rock. Portions of the new album are more subdued and pull listeners in acoustically and introspectively, keyboardist Page McConnell said.

The band members used the album to experiment with their vocals, particularly in the mellower acoustic songs such as "Fikus," "Brian and Robert," "Shafty" and "Roggae." Many interesting vocal parts interlock to form an organized chaos in tracks such as "Limb By Limb," "Meat" and "The Moma Dance."

Phish is capable of playing any style of music, from bluegrass to jazz to hard rock whether on stage or in the studio. Unlike past studio albums such as 1994's "Hoist," "The Story of the

Ghost" takes the band's raw, spur-of-the-moment jams to reflect their true musical wizardry.

But in addition to the musical meshwork in "The Story of the Ghost," it squeals like a pig.

"Guyute," the story of a sadistic pig, is one of the album's longer, orchestrated songs. It includes many of the different musical styles heard in older songs such as "Fluffhead" and "You Enjoy Myself" from 1988's "Junta." "Guyute" also incorporates Phish's distinctive jams filled with tension and release that keep the music energetic and exciting.

"When you listen to Phish, there is always something new to pick out of the music that you've never noticed before," Phish fan Nick Patton said. "This is one of the most interesting things about the band."

"The Story of the Ghost" has been much anticipated since Phish's summer tour, where many of the songs were introduced.

For three consecutive years Phish has held weekend-long festivals of Woodstock proportion that draw thousands of fans from all around the world.

'The Story of the Ghost'

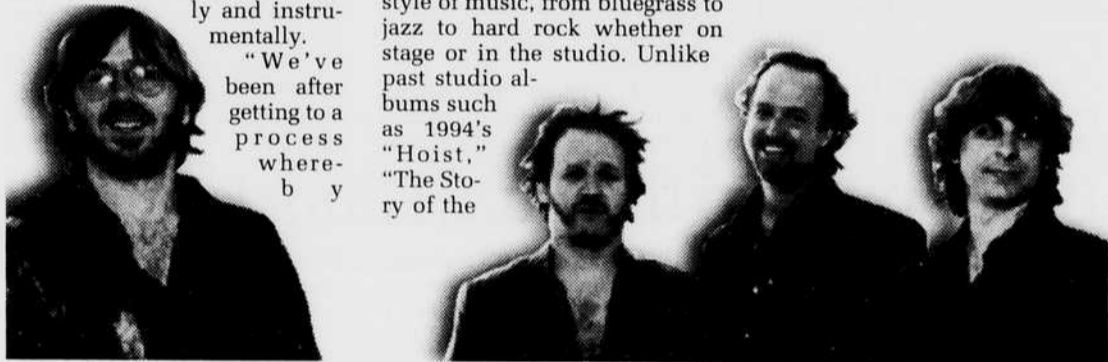
Phish

TYPE: folk/groove
PRODUCED BY:

Electra Entertainment

RATING:

★★★★★



Musicians (L-R) Trey Anastasio, Jon Fishman, Page McConnell and Mike Gordon compose the improvisational powerhouse Phish. *Courtesy photo*



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