



With "Afterlife" Gerry Hemingway has created a song album that puts his artistic personality in a new light. The famous drummer is also an idiosyncratic songwriter, singer and producer. With a handful of musicians he has brought his song visions to fruition after four years of passionate work.

By Pirmin Bossart

Actually, with "After life" Gerry Hemingway has realized a work that has always been dormant in him. As a teenager he breathed in the rock music of the 1960s and 1970s, he has a fascination for songs, he has always sung himself, he loves the country and old time music of the 1920s and 1930s and the blues. And yet, for the past 40 years, he has been primarily as a

Well-known drummer who has played with many luminaries such as Anthony Braxton, Ray Anderson, Mark Helias, Michael Moore and moves just as creatively in contemporary jazz idioms as in freely improvised music.

UNIVERSAL TOPICS

"Afterlife" is a radical departure from what I've done before," says Hemingway. "But I've always been there too.

Songs and storytelling are part of what makes me who I am." It happens when the time is right. As early as 2002 he was on the CD "Songs" of the same name. An underestimated work that was strongly influenced in terms of content and emotionally by his feelings at the time and the imponderables of love. On "Afterlife" his song music is still personal. But it has also become more universal, more mature.

From the texts and in their style is "Afterlife" is an essence of his decades of experience.

Because of that, he hopes the album could reach more people.

Even if there is something personal in his songs: "I didn't want to make a record about myself. For me, it's about addressing and sharing the circumstances of being human as I've experienced them over a long lifetime. I think that the things that have affected me in my life and the I came across, are things that a lot of us do."

THE VOICE SHAPED

"Thousands of hours" flowed into this work. Hemingway thinks artistically comprehensively and is a perfectionist. The challenging pursuit is its elixir. To get in the mood for the process, he began to play an acoustic guitar that Franz Hellmüller had lent him. He developed his voice by covering songs by Dylan, Lou Reed, blues and country songs and making his own bold interpretations of them.

During this long period of preparation he gained a feeling for his voice, its articulations and flows. It was a process that inspired him.

As a drummer he had in instrumental contexts for many years

used his voice. Now something happened. "Hey, you can sing songs!" That was also the tenor of much of the feedback he had just received from musicians.

Hemingway recorded the "basic tracks" on synthesized instruments, keys and guitar. He replaced certain parts with musicians whom he knew could enrich the production with their sound and feel. Other musicians he knows well, such as Christy Doran, Manuel Troller, Florestan Berset, Sebastian Strinning and Michael Moore, shaped the pieces with their improvisations and their own ideas. Troller is listed as a co-author on Such Sweet Wonder. In meticulous detail work, Hemingway chiseled and formed the finished work. Every single song got the nuances and facets it needed for its musical atmosphere.

This album also shows Hemingway as a crafty producer.

POSSIBLE LIVE IMPLEMENTATION

The musical textures are brilliant and complex enough that new subtleties emerge with every listen.

On "Losing Hand" Christy Doran plays a hot blues guitar. Manuel Troller, who is listed as a co-author on "Such Sweet Wonder", and Florestan Berset help shape the songs with their sound on two songs each.

"The Long March" is a solo Sound Poem of transformative power. "Missing You" touches as a healing reflection on the loss of a loved one. On "Junkyard Magic" we meet two people who meet and love each other (again) in two different phases of life.

Hemingway is planning a solo or duo program to showcase his songs and interest in this new dimension in his quest to awaken artistic creativity. "For most of what's on the disk would need it a stage band, which is not feasible or realistic at the moment." Gerry could well imagine preparing "Afterlife" musically and visually for a big stage show. "Sure," he says and grins. Although he doubts that this will be possible in the foreseeable future. "I would go for it."



GERRY HEMINGWAY
after life

Gerry Hemingway (voc, dr, acoustic g, bb, sampler, sound montage), Earl Howard (synth), Manuel Troller (g), Florestan Berset (g), Sebastian Strinning (ts), Linda Egli (f), Bänz Oester (b), Christy Doran (g), Michael Moore (as, cl), Wolfgang Zwiäuer (b), Ralph Alessi (tp), Hannah Wirmsperger (fl), Knut Jensen (additional post production)

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