

Cochran & McAllister, *Pale Blue Dot*

Sacred Black Records 195269328245 USA, 2024; 41 mins.

Pale Blue Dot (You Are Here / Voyager / Sacred Black / Routine Interplanetary Violence / Aberrations Of Light) / Letters from Home / Icarus / Spain / Interstellar Suite

Matthew Cochran and Matthew McAllister are classical guitarists who have performed together for some years, though I believe this to be their first recording as a duo. I was fortunate to hear this album played in its entirety at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in November 2024 and queued to purchase the album thereafter. As the track list suggests, the two Matthews are not afraid to move away from the standard classical repertoire. *Pale Blue Dot* is a Cochran composition named after a 1994 book by the astronomer Carl Sagan, and the titles of the five tracks are taken from chapters in the book. From the brief opening through the propulsive *Voyager* to the contemplative *Sacred Black* to the edgy *Routine Interplanetary Violence* before concluding with the lively *Aberrations of Light*, this is fine playing from both guitarists.

The following three tracks are compositions by well-known jazz musicians. Guitarist Pat Metheny's atmospheric *Letters from Home* ties in with the overall theme of exploration, as does *Icarus* from fellow picker Ralph Towner. The late Chick Corea's *Spain* is his take on the second movement of Joaquin Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* and was also featured on Hank Marvin's *Foolin' With the Feds CD*, reviewed in Issue 129.

At the other end, the space theme is continued with a suite of music from Hans Zimmer's score for Christopher Nolan film *Interstellar*. It translates very well to the two guitars format. *The Ventures in Space* it is not, but there is some excellent guitar playing and imaginative arranging on this edition to the classical guitar repertoire. It even made me track down a copy of Sagan's 1994 book.

-George Geddes