

artist and engineer Ken Barrientos, creating a sparse soundscape. The haunting poem and invocation *Life Love And Light* written and spoken by Rochford's friend Asar Mikael sets the tone. There's a whole *mélange* of influences in this album. Dub, hip-hop, ambient, trance, electronica and yes, jazz. The driving, inexorable beat is hypnotic and irresistible as witnessed by *We Feel The Echoes* and the anthemic *The First Steps*.

Whilst Loose Tubes alumnus Mark Lockheart is a mainstay of this group, there's nothing of the joyous, ordered cacophony of that late-lamented band. Here we're strictly on atmospherics which could, by some, be described as minimalism. Taken as a whole, *Same As You* is more coherent and considerably less frenetic than its immediate predecessor *In Each And Every One* which seemed more reliant on electronics and aural jump cuts. This is a more laidback affair but certainly no less effective, the deceptive simplicity of the music – droning arco bass overlaid with tenor sax on *Of Hi Lands* – combines with a subtle use of drums and electronics. The penultimate track *Dont Let The Feeling Go* (spelling correct), imbued with chanting vocals and a repeated horn hook line, is undoubtedly the album's *pièce de résistance*.

The near-20 minute marathon *Unrelenting Unconditional*, rich with echo-infused tenor sax underpinned by obbligato bass, drums and percussion, finally cedes to a short wistful reprise of *Dont Let The Feeling Go*. Whilst Rochford's music positively epitomises the dubious expression "pushing the envelope", his percussive palette is unique and his vision extraordinary. This might be a contender for album of the year.

Roger Farbey

CHRIS POTTER UNDERGROUND ORCHESTRA

IMAGINARY CITIES

Lament; Imaginary Cities

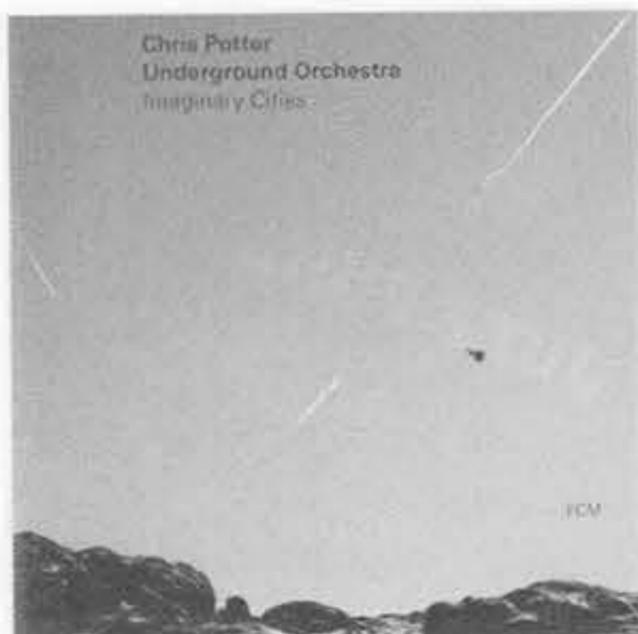
1: *Compassion; Imaginary Cities*

2: *Dualities; Imaginary Cities*

3: *Disintegration; Imaginary Cities*

4: *Rebuilding; Firefly; Shadow Self; Sky (71.12)*

Chris Potter (ts, ss, bcl); Adam Rogers (elg); Craig Taborn (p); Steve Nelson (vib, mar); Fima Ephron (elb); Scott Colley (b); Nate Smith (d); Mark Feldman (vn); Joyce Hammann (vn); Lois



Martin (vla); David Eggar (clo).
New York, 2013.

ECM 470 4075

★★★★★

My reward for observing the customary five or six seconds of silence at the beginning of this ECM release was to hear the best album of new material that I've reviewed for quite some time. It's equally strong and broad in scope in terms of composition and arranging (both all by the leader) and also in its first-rate execution, whether scored or improvised. The string-quartet writing is exceptional, drawing on both Western and Eastern influences, and Potter gets the strings improvising as well as reading their arco and pizzicato parts, which is fairly rare in jazz, at least with this amount of success.

Tracks two to five form an impressive suite, which doesn't upset the balance of material across the album, but is rather the centre of it all, surrounded on either side by related and equally impressive individual tracks. The core of the band is the personnel of Potter's long-established Underground quartet with Adam Rogers, Craig Taborn and Nate Smith, and the larger ensemble here sounds like a natural extension of the quartet. I particularly liked the addition of Potter's old comrade Steve Nelson, who adds both jazz and minimalist-like percussive lines to the multi-layered, but clear texture, complementing Taborn's pianism.

The introductions of *Imaginary Cities 3: Disintegration* and *Firefly* venture briefly into atonal territory, providing further variety alongside the mostly tonal nature of this highly melodic set. The recorded quality is excellent, with just one small criticism of the strings being a shade loud during the bass solo on *Lament*. Potter says, "I didn't want a classical-meets-jazz feeling. I wanted it all to be completely integrated", and it most certainly is.

Dave Jones