



**Frisell, Bill / Downes, Kit / Cyrill, Andrew**  
**Breaking the Shell**

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Red Hook Records is thrilled to announce the September 27, 2024 release of *Breaking the Shell*, the groundbreaking new album from guitar icon Bill Frisell, pipe organist Kit Downes and drummer Andrew Cyrille. This highly anticipated new release showcases a unique and rarely heard combination of instruments – electric guitar with pipe organ, and drums. The result is a meditation on sonancy and an opportunity for three highly creative spirits to roam freely within an entirely new dimension.

With *Breaking the Shell*, this triumvirate of improvisational music luminaries presents something decidedly new and boldly daring in marrying the unlikely combination of electric guitar and drums with pipe organ. Sun Chung, founder and producer of Red Hook Records, had previously produced three studio albums with Cyrille in trio and quartet settings with Bill Frisell. Downes's ethereal pipe organ contributions, captured beautifully on the 2023 Red Hook album *Medna Roso*, set the stage for the intricate and expansive soundscape of *Breaking the Shell*. "This is a trio in a deep state of not-knowing, of having little idea of what the music might actually be or become. Hyper-focused yet free. Fluid and, to some extent, admirably fearless," Chung reflects on the recording process.

The album was recorded over two warm spring days in May 2022, in the serene setting of St. Luke in the Fields, Greenwich Village, New York. This church, with its English village-like architecture and a meticulously maintained Baroque-style organ, provided a unique environment for the trio to explore. The organ, with its 27 stops and 1,670 pipes, required Downes to adapt quickly to its unique characteristics, presenting an infinite range of possibilities. Both the unusual instrumentation and the sonic properties of the hall pushed the trio into a space where listening was key, and the timbre and harmonic capabilities of their instruments were put to the test. This space was a breeding ground for invention, and *Breaking the Shell* acts as a stunningly recorded document of the endeavor.

Featuring a mix of new compositions and interpretations of traditional folk songs, *Breaking the Shell* creates a tapestry of sound that is both innovative and deeply rooted in various musical traditions. The trio creates a wonderfully abstract sound world, a study in perspective in which the organ feels the least upfront – paradoxically so for a congregational instrument that can sometimes sound thunderous and bombastic. The opening track, "May 4th", sets the tone with its immersive soundscape, one can hear each instrumentalist searching for their sound while acting as a part to a whole. Downes' "Untitled 23" has an angular, almost Monk-like melody - the atmosphere becomes more urban and edgy – more, in fact, New York. "Kasei Valles" is an expansive piece, marrying an overdriven guitar and the full breadth of the organ, saturating the church with sound. The track is named after a giant flood region and system of canyons – 300

miles wide and almost 1,000 miles long – on the planet Mars. The sound collage becomes overtime, increasingly dark, dense and unsettling, striking an image of the solitude and tempestuous nature of this landscape.

“El”, composed by Downes, explores a more harmonious side to this instrumental pairing. The trio tells a wistful tale while exploring their collective textures. Cellist Lucy Railton adds lushness, accompanying Frisell’s rendering of the sweet-toned melody and Cyrille’s exquisite and intuitive brushwork. Frisell’s “Two Twins” is a master-class in dynamics and reactivity - Cyrille sensitively sculpts the composition through his rhythmic refrains. This piece, along with “Southern Body” supply a whole universe of possibilities; this is supremely visual music that evokes images of shimmering water, cloud forest and deep space. “Cypher” displays Downes’ ability to utilize the pipe organ like a pad synth, creating sound-fields that phase through waves of complimenting and clashing with the stated harmonies. This short, eerie and pulsating piece features a sound that is more pared back and unhurried, the narrative more implied.

The album includes beautiful renditions of Cyrille’s ballad “Proximity” and two European traditional folk songs, the moody “Sjung Herte Sjung” from Norway and “Este a Székelyeknél” from Hungary, which concludes with the sound of wind whispering through the organ’s pipes, like a giant creature gently exhaling. These tracks, along with original compositions by Frisell and Downes, showcase the trio’s ability to create a cohesive and compelling musical narrative that transcends genre.

In the album’s liner notes, jazz journalist Philip Watson indicates, “This is a trio serving a force and a philosophy greater than itself. Bill Frisell, Kit Downes and Andrew Cyrille are like a tetrahedron, a triangular pyramid, a three-dimensional equilateral triangle with four faces, the fourth being the creation and contours of the music itself.” Breaking the Shell is a testament to these fine musicians’ ability to listen, react, and craft emotive pieces in real-time - the very cornerstone of jazz music, stretched into a new dimension. This album is a thrilling exploration of sound and a celebration of the limitless possibilities of improvisational music.

## Featured artist

Cyrrill, Andrew  
Downes, Kit

## Tracklist

1.	May 4th	03:10
2.	Untitled 2023	03:32
3.	Kasei Valles	04:46
4.	El	04:54
5.	Southern Body	04:44
6.	Sjung Hjerte Sjung	05:01
7.	Two Twins	03:21
8.	July 2nd	03:50
9.	Cypher	01:49
10.	Proximity	02:44
11.	Este a Székelyeknél	03:55