

THE VINYL *District*

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by Joseph Neff

Masayuki Takayanagi New Direction Unit, *Axis/Another Revolvable Thing (Blank Forms Editions)* This live set, reissued both as two separate LPs in the manner and sequence of their original release by Offbeat Records in 1975 and on 2CD in chronological playing order for the first time, continues Blank Forms' reissue program tackling the work of Japanese guitarist Takayanagi, following *April is the cruelest month*, which came out in June of 2019 (a reissue pick in this column at the time). A notable occurrence in Takayanagi's background is getting blown away by "Free Form Guitar" from the debut album by Chicago Transit Authority (soon to be just plain ol' Chicago), the piece totally rearranging his musical objectives. The result was the formation of New Direction for the Arts, soon to be renamed New Direction Unit. Takayanagi's epiphany is worth stressing here, as listening to these pieces as they were played can inspire a few thoughts of Windy City-based AACM and Art Ensemble abstract collectivity, which is only accentuated by multi-reed man Kenji Mori's liking for flutes, plus a general lack of leadership atmosphere. Chronologically, a solo percussion piece "Fragment – III" (but 13 minutes long), delivered by Hiroshi Yamazaki (bassist Nobuyoshi Ino rounds out the group), separates the first two fragments, which are each given the parenthetical "Gradually Projection," and the final three; these are dubbed "Mass Projection." In short, the Unit moves through skittering loose interplay (a tad Euro free improv-like) into full-boil roar, though it's important to relate how the pieces all offer rewarding progressions individually. Thusly, the preservation of the original vinyl sequences makes sense. The latter cuts can hit like an especially wild ESP-Disk or BYG-Actuel session with psych-rock/ out-rock guitar in the mix. The original performance flow is slightly preferred, but the vinyl progressions offer a comparable appeal. **A**

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