



photo by Eli Koppel

Ty Citerman

www.tyciterman.com

Praise for Time Phase Trio's 2023 Infrequent Seams release "Time Phase Trio (featuring the BCDs):"

"Time Phase Trio...stake out a territory that's infused with a certain wry humour - even a little slapstick levity - not least because it includes the fruity parts and squelches of Jen Baker's loquacious trombone. Percussionist Shayna Dunkelman provides gently accented and thoughtfully positioned tom beats and cymbal splashes, while guitarist Ty Citerman adds taut plunks and pings...A debt to Anthony Braxton's playfully serious processes seems likely."

-Daniel Spicer, *The Wire (UK)*

praise for Bop Kabbalah+Voices' 2022 Infrequent Seams release "The Yiddish Song Cycle Live:"

"The chamber, delicate atmosphere of this performance charges it with irreverent, prayer-like devotion and commitment, spiced with the sober realization that the fight against reactionary, greedy evils is never over..."

-Eyal Hareuveni, *Salt Peanuts*

"*Bop Kabbalah+Voices: The Yiddish Song Cycle Live* has opened a whole new world of sound to my jaded ears...This is not a project for those looking to dance, to rock out, or to sing along with on a long road trip."

-Carl F. Gauze, *Ink19*

praise for the 2020 Infrequent Seams release "Bop Kabbalah+Voices: When You Speak of Times to Come..." :

"Inspiring and moving...beautifully arranged and delivered." -Eyal Hareuveni, *Salt Peanuts*

"If there ever was an album for the end of the year on the brink of a holocaust delivered via lethal injection, this is it."

-delarue, *New York Music Daily*

"...a dreamy set of Citerman's guitar compositions...Berkson and Serpa approach the texts with an elegant restraint, at times recalling medieval chant, blending their voices in eerie and unexpected ways."

-Rokhl Kafrissen, *Tablet Magazine*

praise for the 2014 Tzadik Records release "Bop Kabbalah:"

"...one of the year's most arresting recordings...wailing with enough majesty to bring down the walls of Jericho."

-Matt R. Lohr, *Jazztimes*

"[Four Stars] At its core, the record serves as Citerman's vision of Jewish-themed music filtered through an improvisational lens. Traditional klezmer and nigunim strains mix-and-match with rock, swing and modalism, creating snazzy hybrids...that snoop, spy and survey with one eye toward the serious and the other toward make-believe."

-Bob Gendron, *Downbeat*

"...Ty Citerman delves deep into his Jewish roots in this brilliant new project for the Tzadik Jewish series. Drawing inspiration from sources as varied as the Beat Generation, medieval Eastern European and Asian music modes and the rich depths of Kabbalistic mysticism, Ty has fashioned an intense and colorful program of modernist music that blends klezmer, nigunim, jazz, rock, classical and more. [His] most ambitious and powerful project to date is also his most personal and heartfelt."

-John Zorn

Brooklyn-based guitarist, composer and bandleader Ty Citerman began his professional career at a young age, playing in local clubs with jazz and rock bands as a teenager in his native St. Louis. He moved to New York City to attend Columbia University in 1992 and quickly planted himself in the NYC music scene. Since then, he has spent thirty years exploring a broad aesthetic landscape of modern jazz, new music, rock and free improvisation.

His ten year-old project **Bop Kabbalah** explores the juxtaposition of original composition, improvisation and Jewish musical traditions. Its trio incarnation **Bop Kabbalah+Voices** (with vocalist **Sara Serpa** and vocalist/pianist **Judith Berkson**) released a CD of original Yiddish labor songs on Infrequent Seams in December 2020 and then a live recording on the same label in 2022. Prior to that, the project's quartet of electric guitar, trumpet/cornet, bass clarinet and drums was commissioned to record for **John Zorn's "Radical Jewish Culture"** series on **Tzadik Records**. Released in May 2014, the CD received four star reviews in *Downbeat* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, and was hailed in *Jazztimes*, *The New York City Jazz Record*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Jewish Exponent* and *jazzColours* (Italy). Bop Kabbalah showcases Ty's guitar work, his unique compositional voice and his contribution to a longstanding tradition of creative Jewish music.

Ty was a founding member of the irreverent chamber jazz collective quartet **Gutbucket**, which from 1999-2019 released six recordings of original music and toured across the US and Europe. *JazzTimes* called his composition "Murakami" from "Flock" (2011) "...one of the band's finest compositions to date...a track that finds the quartet painting in bold, dark strokes of color with moments of glistening light..." His piece "Punkass Rumbledink" was featured at the **Bang on a Can Marathon**, and *The Guardian* (UK) wrote that "Throsp%" (2005) "...boasts a hypnotically creeping guitar riff and an atmosphere of sustained menace [which] is not standard jazz territory." Gutbucket's acclaimed 2015 CD "Dance" was recorded during a weeklong residency at the Stone in New York City.

Ty composed original theme music for the award-winning podcast **Tradeoffs**, which premiered in 2019 and has presented more than 200 episodes. He also scored and performed music for the 2019 **St. Anne's Warehouse Labapalooza!** puppetry festival show "To Love What Death Has Touched," by Kevin White. Over the past 25 years, he has performed on some of the world's finest stages, including Carnegie Hall, London Jazz Festival, Paris Jazz Festival, Belgrade Jazz Festival, Jazz a Vienne, Earshot Jazz Festival, Jazz Saalfelden and more. His music has been performed by **JACK Quartet**, **Bearthoven**, **Ethel** and Sara Schoenbeck and has been presented by the **Rubin Museum of Art**, Anti-Social Music (ASM), the **Composers Now Festival** and the Infrequent Seams Streamfest. He has recorded for Cantaloupe Music, Cuneiform Records, Enja (Germany), NRW (Germany), Knitting Factory Records, Tzadik Records and Infrequent Seams. Ty's music has been featured on **National Public Radio** (*World Cafe Live* and *Soundcheck*), **Radio Free Europe** and numerous other stations across the world.

Over the past decade Ty has been writing and premiering a series of **solo guitar pieces** presented by Anti-Social Music, most recently "Prepared Etude No. 7" (2022), "Sorcery and Sedition" (2020) and "Susurrus" (2019). He also performs in a duo with guitarist **Anders Nillson** called the 49ers, playing original pieces and re-arranged works by Bartok, Schoenberg and Shostakovich. Ty continues to compose chamber music for various instrumentations and is an active freelancer in the New York contemporary music scene, having played with such luminaries as John Zorn, Ikue Mori, Sylvie Courvoisier, Kaoru Watanabe, **Rhys Chatham**, Dana Lyn, **Glenn Branca** and **Frank London**. In June 2022, he premiered new music for **Time Phase Trio**, featuring trombonist Jen Baker, percussionist Shayna Dunkelman and himself on guitar and electronics at the Infrequent Seams Streamfest III; that group released its debut recording on Infrequent Seams' K7 Commissioning Series in March 2023.

Ty has had a vibrant teaching studio for nearly thirty years and is an adjunct assistant professor of music at CUNY's Brooklyn College; he is also on the guitar and composition faculty at the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music. He has been invited as a guest artist to teach programs on composition, arrangement and improvisation at the Eastman School of Music, California Institute of the Arts, University of Minnesota, University of Missouri, Dartmouth College, and the Bang on a Can Summer Music Institute.

Ty is the proud recipient of a **Brooklyn Arts Council grant in 2018** and again in **2023** to support the composition and performance of two original Yiddish song cycles for social change: "Yiddish Labor Songs" and "Yiddish Climate Justice Songs." The most recent of these premiered in November 2023 with Bop Kabbalah+Voices and guest percussionist Shayna Dunkelman.

COMMUNITY

Downtown, in Exile

Rokhl's Golden City: The Yiddish sounds of New York's past—and present

BY ROKHL KAFRISSEN

JANUARY 15, 2021

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When I talked with Brooklyn-based guitarist Ty Citerman recently, he recalled how, as a musician touring outside the United States in the 2000s, the Knitting Factory was a larger-than-life brand, an identifiable marker of the coolest avant-garde music New York had to offer. His jazz-rock band *Gutbucket* was embedded in the late 1990s Knitting Factory downtown scene, and it was at that point he began seriously listening to the Jewish-jazz fusions coming out of those same places.

The Leonard Street Knitting Factory has been closed for over a decade, though the Knitting Factory name has since been applied to various venues in New York and around the world. None, however, has proven to have the same kind of magic as the first and second locations.

As the Knitting Factory was focused on building a global brand, a new club called Tonic took its place at what I would consider the center of the downtown Jewish music scene. Tonic's opening in 1998 coincided with my own arrival in New York City, and I spent countless hours there until its

(still devastating) closure in 2007. Tonic was the kind of place that was small enough to be intimate, but big enough to actually accommodate a crowd (or what passes for an avant-garde jazz "crowd"). Most importantly, on Sunday they had bagels.

Citerman recalls one Tonic show in particular as pivotal to his development as a musician. He had gone to see John Zorn and guitarist Fred Frith play a duo set. Zorn was sick, so Frith went on alone. That show "changed my notion of what a solo guitar performance could be, forever," he said. Tonic had that kind of magical ability, Citerman told me, to facilitate intense connections, between audience and musician and between musicians themselves. At Zorn's invitation, Citerman created a project for Zorn's Tzadik Records, what ended up being the first *Bop Kabbalah* CD in 2014.

At the end of 2020, Citerman released *Bop Kabbalah + Voices: When You Speak of Times to Come (Ven du redst fun naye tsaytn)*. It's a dreamy set of Citerman's guitar compositions, settings for Yiddish poetry sung by Judith

Berkson and Sara Serpa. Berkson and Serpa approach the texts with an elegant restraint, at times recalling medieval chant, blending their voices in eerie and unexpected ways.

Citerman grew up hearing Yiddish in his family and had always felt drawn to the language. Like many, his downtown geography extends up to 45 East 33rd Street, the former home of the Workmen's Circle (and its many associated organizations). It was there that he took his first Yiddish class with Pesach Fiszman (ז"ל), and it was in the Workmen's Circle's unsexy, but always well-stocked, bookshop that he bought his first Klezmatics CD.

Many years after buying that CD, he found himself at Klezmatics co-founder Frank London's apartment, chatting with the Yiddish Princess herself, Sarah Gordon. Gordon lent him a thick volume of Yiddish poetry in translation and the seed of *Bop Kabbalah + Voices* was planted. In the lead-up to the 2016 election, he was looking for texts that spoke to our own moment of unrest and resistance. It's easy to see why Citerman chose Avrom Reyzn's "*Dayres fun der tsukunft*" (Future Generations) as his starting point: "Future generations, brothers still to come/Don't you dare/Be scornful of our songs/Songs about the weak/Songs of the exhausted/In a poor generation/Before the world's decline."

The YIVO Encyclopedia [entry on Avrom Reyzn](#) somewhat dryly notes that the "simplicity of his poems and their inherent adaptability to music gained them a broad audience and the affection of readers." And while that's true, the achievement of *Bop Kabbalah + Voices* is to point to the multilayered quality of that simplicity, especially when tied to an aesthetically far-reaching project such as this.

salt peanuts*

På skive

BOP KABBALAH + VOICES

«When You Speak of Times to Come (Ven Du Redst Fun Naye Tsaytn)»
INFREQUENT SEAMS



New York-based guitarist-composer Ty Citerman, known from the punk-jazz Gutbucket quartet, began his Bop Kabbalah project in 2014 and released a self-titled, instrumental album on John Zorn's Tzadik label's Radical Jewish Culture series in 2014. «When You Speak of Times to Come» is an ambitious evolution of this project, a song-cycle that was inspired by more than century-old Yiddish labor songs and poems about the fight against capitalism. These texts originated during the time of Citerman's grandparents' escape from state-sponsored persecution in Ukraine and Russia, and resonate loudly with today's American – and even global – political landscape. These songs ask the listeners to imagine and join the organized struggle for a more just, humane world. Accordingly, a portion of the profits from this project will support the immigrant justice work of New Sanctuary Coalition.

Bop Kabbalah+voices features Citerman on guitar and electronics plus jazz vocalist Sara Serpa and soprano-cantor-composer Judith Berkson, and was recorded in June 2019. «When You Speak of Times to Come» is divided into a nine-part suite of original Yiddish labor songs and the four-movement «Future Generations (Doyrus Fun Der Tsukunft)». Serpa and Berkson sing the leftist texts in Yiddish and in English, while Citerman offers subtle, lyrical and hypnotic soundscapes that embrace their acrobatic and passionate delivery.

TY CITERMAN

February 16, 2021

Bop Kabbalah + Voices: When You Speak Of Times To Come

Self-Released, 2020

9/10

[Listen to Bop Kabbalah + Voices: When You Speak Of Times To Come](#)

A Brooklyn based guitarist and songwriter who is well versed in jazz, rock and even classical sounds, Ty Citerman places himself in the company of Judith Berkson and Sara Serpa on this unclassifiable effort, where an avant-garde experience embraces chamber, classical and artistic ideas.

After the brief opening of "Prayer", where many voices sing and talk with an actual prayer amid some soft ambience, "Gebet" follows with Serpa and Berkson's gentle vocals working together alongside Citerman's bare instrumentation.

Further on, "Geyt Brider! Geyt" displays incredible vocal harmonies between the women, as Citerman lays down intricate guitar work to illuminate the warm atmosphere, while "Ver Tut Stroyen Movern, Palatsn?" gets a bit more forceful musically and lyrically with a strong vocal range and louder moments from Citerman. "Es Rirt Zikh", the album highlight, then spends 7 minutes with a poetic and melodic display of stirring guitar work and soulful singing.

The final track, "Future Generations (Doyrus Fun Der Tsukunft)" unfolds across 4 chapters, where mysterious storytelling, vocal harmonies and soaring chanting are spread across a very diverse landscape.

This is Citerman's first album as bandleader in 6 years (he also plays in Gutbucket), and he brings a wealth of creativity to a project that few others would even attempt. A concept album that composes and arranges 150 year old texts from the Yiddish labor movement, expect intimacy, exploration and awe in this fascinating record.

Travels well with: **The Art Ensemble Of Chicago**- *Tutankhamun*; **Charles Lloyd & The Marvels**- *Vanished Gardens*

The opening suite begins with a short Jewish prayer but soon demands «'bread and human rights» from the Russian Tsar Nicholas II. The revolutionary text «Mit Eyn Hant Hostu Undz Gegebn Di Konstitutsieh (With One Hand You Gave Us the Constitution)», from the Russian Revolution of 1905, repeats the message: «down with you, you executioner, you murderer, get off the throne! No one believes in you anymore! Only in the red flag», and its fierce cry against fascism and false promises by authoritarian rulers ring true today. Its arrangement charges the suggestive, operatic voices of Serpa and Berkson with a delicate 21st-century metal drone. «Es Rirt Zikh» ends this suite. It is a labor poem excerpt by Morris Winchevsky from 1886, and its lyrics («Do you hear, children, how it's moving...?») propels a sense of musical and political possibility, even during our current, turbulent times. It blends vocal arrangements that nod to Meredith Monk's works and a blues-tinged theme, spiced with a touch of dissonance that draws inspiration from another Monk, Thelonious.

The «Future Generations (Doyrus Fun Der Tsukunft)» addresses current, urgent issues as the climate crisis, but still speaks about the need for commitment for just, social change. This 23-minutes piece draws few motives from klezmer music and offers a lush, minimalistic guitar groove but often also noisy and unsettling eruptions – or a Citerman puts it: «our songs resonate with grief.. our melodies have a dismal longing and hidden rage». The last movement «Times to Come» marks that the struggle for a better, just world never ends, but we have plenty of models to reflect on and learn from. Symbolically, it ends with the humble, succinct repetition of the Yiddish phrase «onloshn», which translates simply as «silence» or «speechlessness».

Inspiring and moving, and beautifully arranged and delivered.

Eyal Hareuveni

Ty Citerman (g, v, elec, prep-g, cracklebox), Sara Serpa (v), Judith Berkson (v, p)

TAKE EFFECT



TheWire

The Wire 470 April 2023

New York label Infrequent Seams initiates a subscription series in search of singularity

By Daniel Spicer

James Ilgenfritz/Sandy Ewen/Michael Foster

Ekphrastic Discourse

Infrequent Seams DL/MC

Time Phase Trio

Time Phase Trio

Infrequent Seams DL/MC

William Roper/Cassia Streb/Tim Feeney

Avenue 64

Infrequent Seams DL/MC

Lily Guarneros Maase

blood::face

Infrequent Seams DL/MC

The New York label Infrequent Seams seeks to document the emergence of a single “post-millennial genre” that locates its origins in the 20th century avant garde traditions of the AACM, MEV, Sonic Arts Union, no wave, the New York School and free jazz. That’s already meant releasing work by established musicians such as Andrew Cyrille, Andrea Parkins and Elliott Sharp. But these first four releases in the new K7 Commissioning Series – for which the label is adopting a subscription model, offering one download release plus limited tape run per month – presents artists still in their ascendance.

Collective instrumental free improvisation is the context for two of them, both by trios. Double bassist (and label runner) James Ilgenfritz, electric guitarist Sandy Ewen and saxophonist Michael Foster offer a suite of somewhat arid improvisations with echoes of Evan Parker/Derek Bailey/Han Bennink’s *Topography Of The Lungs*, albeit with that date’s ferocity largely excised. At one extreme, drily percussive reed-slaps and frictive scrapes sketch a sparse, fidgety pointillism. At the other, windy susurrations, glowering amp hum and parched arco drones exude a not entirely welcoming aural environment. The whole session seems to suggest a doomed industriousness in some Sisyphean purgatory.

Time Phase Trio, in contrast, stake out a territory that’s infused with a certain wry humour – even a little slapstick levity – not least because it includes the fruity parps and squelches of Jen Baker’s loquacious trombone. Percussionist Shayna Dunkelman provides gently accented and thoughtfully positioned tom beats and cymbal splashes, while guitarist

Ty Citerman adds taut plunks and pings. Several tracks are “choice based” improvisations arranged by Citerman, which allow the performers to manipulate single bar cells as they see fit within the overarching confines of the piece. A debt to Anthony Braxton’s playfully serious processes seems likely.

Two releases from Los Angeles based artists reveal the label’s intent to document more than just jazz-adjacent free improv. Cassia Streb, Tim Feeney and William Roper improvise together on three tracks that explore each artist’s compositional systems. Streb’s utilises graphically transcribed field recordings of LA’s Highland Park region interpreted through scratched drum skins, hushed harmonics and plaintive bleats. Feeney’s layers fragile snippets of sound produced by a rubbed wine glass, jingling bells and a lonesome viola. Roper’s centres on a poetic recitation with added string drones, metallic scrapes and a tootling tuba. The whole session is pregnant with mystery.

Meximerican guitarist Lily Guarneros Maase’s offering is both the most conventional and the most surprising. “Blood” is haunting psychedelic folk rock for full acoustic band, like Linda Perhacs fronting The Skygreen Leopards, with a scalp-tingling slide guitar solo by Insun Blemel. Elsewhere, Maase displays her considerable chops with solo improvisations: “Kodafilm 3” and “Kodafilm 6” suggest a backwoods exoticism like Davey Graham in trapper’s furs, while “Improvisation Two” follows a more jaggedly atonal aesthetic. It’s a deeply imaginative date that brilliantly sidesteps tired notions of the American Primitive. ○

Fingerpicking good: Lily Guarneros Maase



NEW YORK MUSIC DAILY

A Quietly Searing, Politically-Fueled New Album From Guitarist Ty Citerman and Bop Kabbalah

by delarue

Guitarist [Ty Citerman's Bop Kabbalah](#) is best known for rocking out centuries-old Jewish themes. His latest release under the Bop Kabbalah monicker, *When You Speak of Times to Come* – streaming at [Bandcamp](#) – is just as radical, and radically different. As so many artists have done during the lockdown, this is far more intimate, a trio record with singers [Sara Serpa](#) and [Judith Berkson](#).

This one's all about contrasts. Citerman shifts between stark, acidic minimalism, cold sparks of noise and the minor-key growl he's best known for as the two women add lushness and haunting close harmonies. This album often sounds like it's made by a much larger ensemble. Serpa and Berkson often switch between channels in the mix: the former is more misty yet also more crystalline, while Berkson's voice is more edgy and forceful. Together they cover all the bases.

They also deliver spoken word in both English and Yiddish in a handful of righteously revolutionary interludes between songs, along with the album's rather exasperated opening prayer. The brief first song has simple, somber counterpoint between the two women and spiky harmonics from Citerman.

The second spoken-word interlude instructs us to "Demand bread from tsars and dukes, demand human rights, demand everything we've created." In year of the lockdown, that has never been more of an imperative! The women's uneasy close harmonies and blippy quasi-operatics float and dance as Citerman builds from icepick incisions to a snarl in Geyt Brider Geyt.

"With one hand you gave us the Constitution, with the other you took it back... you thought you could divert the revolution, that was your dirty politics. Down with you, you executioner, you muderer, get off the throne, no one believes in you anymore, only in the red flag," the trio warn as the album's fifth cut slowly builds up steam. Citerman winds down his multitracks, hits his distortion pedal and cuts loose with a roar.

Berkson sings the moody, steady *Ver Tut Stroyen Movern Palatsn* – an exploration of who does all the heavy lifting, and who gets the benefit of all that lifting – against Serpa's signature vocalese, and Citerman's burning dynamic shifts.

They wind down the hypnotic, pulsing, intertwining *Es Rirt Zikh* with an expansive, exploratory solo. The three build considerably more haunting variations on an old nigan in the first part of the suite *Future Generations* – is that Berkson or Serpa on piano?

The women's harmonies are especially plaintive in the second part, *At Night*, a furtively slashing revolutionary tableau: [Gordon Grdina's](#) darkest work comes to mind here. The album's grittiest and most unhinged interlude is part three, *Hidden Rage*. The chillingly chromatic concluding movement, with its brooding tradeoffs between piano and guitar, serves as the title track. If there ever was an album for the end of the year on the brink of a holocaust delivered via lethal injection, this is it.

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The Sydney Morning Herald Entertainment

Shortlist CD reviews

September 12, 2014

JAZZ-ROCK

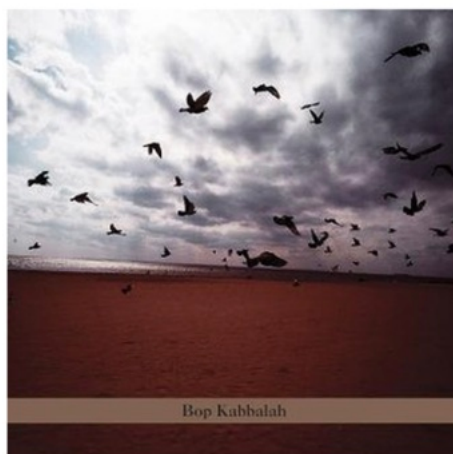
Ty Citerman

BOP KABBALAH

(TZADIK)

4 stars

Imagine if the CLOUDS made a sound other than thunder when they clashed. A shrieking, perhaps, or maniacal laughter. Or perhaps the sound of Ty Citerman's *Bop Kabbalah*, with its ominous bass clarinet (Ken Thomson), dark riffs (Citerman's guitar), trumpet howls (Ben Holmes) and agitated drumming (Adam D. Gold). When this band is not sounding like the actual storm, it carries all the foreboding of the build-up to



Frippian: Ty Citerman's thunderous Bop Kabbalah takes its cue from Jewish traditional music.

one. Nothing light or frivolous occurs. The bass clarinet casts murky shadows, and Citerman (best known as a member of Gutbucket) showers the music with sudden squalls of noise, moody film-noirish lines, or occasionally labyrinthine patterns reminiscent of King Crimson's Robert Fripp. The unusual instrumentation also ensures gaping holes (or deep fissures) open up in the group texture, which Gold emphasises rather than fills. Often the two horns spiral around each other in elaborate dialogues rather than playing solos, per se. Taking his cues from Jewish traditional music, Citerman has penned all the pieces, giving them humorous names such as *Exchanging Pleantries with a Wall*.

JOHN SHAND

JazzTimes

AMERICA'S JAZZ MAGAZINE

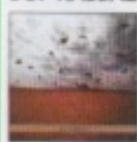
AUGUST 2014 • \$5.95

ing tracks: the bubbly "Denge Merenge," the smooth, creamy "I Came So Far to See You" and the Parker classic. No matter the style on the SteepleChase disc, its cuts bristle with cleverness and personality. Charette has assembled a sextet equal to any task he sets, a group that can raise the roof while it blows your mind. Subtly,

CARLO WOLFF

TY CITERMAN

BOP KABBALAH (Tzadik)



If one classifies *Bop Kabbalah*, the self-titled debut recording of the quartet fronted by Gutbucket founding member Ty Citerman, as "sacred music," then it is as singular an example of the form as anything Duke Ellington ever composed. The latest installment in Tzadik's Radical Jewish Culture series, the album's eight tracks, all written by Citerman, fuse jazz and rock with Hebrew instrumental and choral traditions for a multifaceted survey of the Jewish diaspora in song.

On the kickoff track, "The Cossack Who Smelt of Vodka," Citerman's galloping guitar evokes the terror of the titular figure riding into a Jewish village, while "The Synagogue Detective" is film noir *shul*-style, trumpeter Ben Holmes and bass clarinetist Ken Thomson nailing a slinky theme, ably abetted by fellow Gutbucketer Adam D Gold's loping drums. The harsh yet witty "Snout" alternates klezmer-leaning harmonic invention with free-jazz freak-outs, and an elegiac intro gives "After All That Has Happened" a mournful undergirding that intensifies Citerman's fiercely rock-oriented playing.

For all the fuzz-drenched roar, Citerman is notably understated here; he cedes pride of place to his compositional gifts while granting Thomson and Holmes the flashier showcase solos. *Bop Kabbalah*'s longest track, the 10-and-a-half-minute "Engaging Pleasantries With a Wall," is the album's highlight and one of the year's most arresting recordings.

Backed by Gold's sparse snare and cymbals, Citerman's electronics-enhanced washes of guitar conjure Middle Eastern mysticism over which an echo-enhanced Thomson and Holmes harmonize rapturously. The piece builds to a speaking-in-tongues frenzy before breaking into a cresting fanfare, Holmes and Citerman wailing with enough majesty to bring down the walls of Jericho. It's frightening yet exhilarating, the very sound of spiritual ecstasy. **MATT R. LOHR**

THEO CROKER

AFRO PHYSICIST (DDB/OKeh)



Afro Physicist, trumpeter Theo Croker's third album as a leader and his debut on Dee Dee Bridgewater's DDB imprint and the Sony-owned OKeh brand, showcases him in a context that might be called "retro-progressive." Many of its stylistic elements have a distinct '70s-era flavor, but the way Croker mashes them together and then tops

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14 JUNE 2014 | THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD



Eponymous
Ty Citerman's *Bop Kabbalah* (Tzadik)
by Brad Cohan

For a composer to name a tune "Fuck You and Your Hipster Tie," he has to have some major cajones. That edgy rhetoric has been the norm for the deliciously skronky, progressive jazz collective Gutbucket so it should be no surprise that guitarist Ty Citerman—a co-founder of Gutbucket in 1999—has fused elements of that band's shtick into the peppy jazz-rock fusion of

his newest and superbly named group, *Bop Kabbalah*. That familial theme is further ingrained as fellow Gutbucketers Ken Thomson (bass clarinet) and Adam Gold (drums), along with trumpeter Ben Holmes, join Citerman for testimonials based on his Jewish rearing.

With Citerman giving the listener a cozy peek inside his roots, *Bop Kabbalah* proves to be a hardbop take on punk-flavored Jewish music. But what distinguishes Citerman's music is its breezy quality; to pull that off is quite a task with as bustling a lineup as this one. The ambiance may be feathery but it's a swinging affair. While Citerman may receive top billing, his subtle, tasteful and occasionally chugging guitar lines are no more at the forefront than Thomson and Holmes's usually rollicking horn give and take. Only in the atmospheric "Exchanging Pleasantries with a Wall" does Citerman take a star turn with an ebb and flow of guitar introspections.

Conveying experiences with Judaism through explorations of Klezmer, nigunim and Downtown jazz, with improvisational touches that naturally echo Tzadik label-head John Zorn, *Bop Kabbalah* effortlessly thumps its way through whimsical compositions with deep and expressive lyricism. There's the light jabs of "The Synagogue Detective," Citerman channeling his inner Marc Ribot; punchy horn interplay of "Talmudic Breakbeat"; marching bebop of "The Cossack Who Smelt of Vodka"; and punk-jazz squawk of "Snout."

Bop Kabbalah's pieces each tell an animated tale of Citerman's youth, whether about playing hooky from Hebrew school, a dinner table squabble, a trip to the Israeli homeland or recipes from the old world, all with the underpinnings of a brightly colored, spontaneous and cinematic soundtrack.

For more information, visit tzadik.com. This project is at Joe's Pub Jun. 2nd. See Calendar.

by Samuel Weinberg

For the past few decades, alto-saxophonist and composer John Zorn has been presenting what he dubs the "Radical Jewish Culture Series". From Zorn's long-standing band Masada (in all of its various iterations), to his seminal record *Bar Kokhba* to Ben Goldberg's *Speech Communication* and all of the Radical Jewish stalwarts like Shanir Blumenkrantz, Zorn's Tzadik imprint has been flooded by the mass of artists commissioned for this series and their own idiosyncratic methods for tackling Zorn's basic mission which, in his own words, is:

"The [RJC] series is an ongoing project. A challenge posed to adventurous musical thinkers. What is Jewish music? What is its future? If asked to make a contribution to Jewish culture, what would you do? Can Jewish music exist without a connection to klezmer, cantorial or Yiddish theatre? All of the CDs on the Tzadik RJC series address these issues through the vision and imagination of individual musical minds."

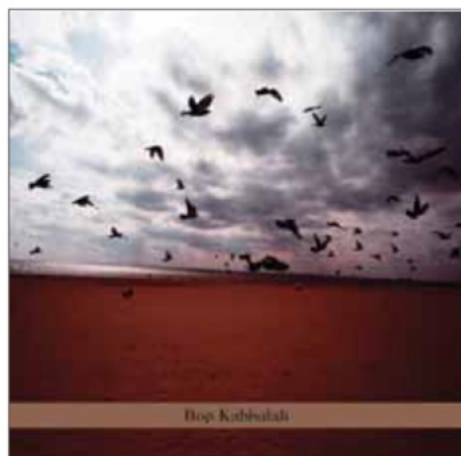
The most recent musical mind to address these questions and puzzles is the inventive guitarist and composer Ty Citerman, with his new record *Bop Kabbalah* (Tzadik). The record's name alone—taken from an Allen Ginsberg poem—seems to encapsulate a bold response to Zorn's aforementioned problems, and the music on the disc surely lives up to these expectations. On *Bop Kabbalah*, Citerman, who is known for his genre-defying work with the group Gutbucket, has surrounded himself with able partners to execute his vision: trumpeter Ben Holmes, bass-clarinetist Ken Thomson and drummer Adam D Gold. Throughout the disc's eight tracks, the quartet moves through a number of feels, obliquely hinting at the not-so-obvious nod to Klezmer sensibility, all while maintaining a palpable originality.

The record begins with "The Cossack Who Smelt of Vodka" which opens with a rather dark, haunting repeated cell doubled by Citerman and Thomson, broken by an impressive and motivic solo by Thomson over the vamp. Other highlights include the aptly titled "The Synagogue Detective", which is rather suspenseful and creeps along, with a tricky and slightly off-kilter bass clarinet line (imagine Philip Marlowe on manischewitz); the remarkably catchy "Talmudic Breakbeat", which offers a nice feature for Holmes; and "Exchanging Pleasantries With a Wall" which showcases the most impressive guitar work of Citerman's on this date, in which he crafts an immense sonic landscape unaccompanied, for the first two minutes, then he is slowly joined by an unfolding melody, which hovers atop his well-crafted frame.

AUGUST 2014

DOWNBEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond



Ty Citerman
Bop Kabbalah
 TZADIK 8183
 ★★★★★

Ty Citerman is no stranger to experimentation—or animation. A member of avant-garde collective Gutbucket, the guitarist has also performed with Glenn Branca, Rhys Chatham and John Zorn. Akin to the latter risk-taker, Citerman shares interest in setting music to films and graphic novels. The pastime becomes apparent throughout the spirited *Bop Kabbalah*, on which active dialogues unfold like those in comic books. While words such as "blat!", "zap!" and "whiz!" aren't uttered, onomatopoeia dot Citerman's sonic landscapes.

The composer's clever song titles indicate the project's nose for humor and imagination. "The Cossack Who Smelt Of Vodka," "The Synagogue Detective" and "The Voice That Led Us Here And Then Waltzed/Hobbled Away" sound as if they could be names of *The Adventures of Tintin* volumes, or borrowed from the pages of another classic *bande dessinée*. Similarly, the openness, leanness and sequential flow in Citerman's arrangements reflect the focused minimalism inherent in individual comic panels. Seldom haphazard and never rushed, his quartet allows narratives to unfold. Tone, interplay and pacing take precedence. Only on the overly mystic "Exchanging Pleasantries With A Wall" does the group want for direction.

At its core, the record serves as Citerman's vision of Jewish-themed music filtered through an improvisational lens. Traditional klezmer and nigunim strains mix-and-match with rock, swing and modalism, creating snazzy hybrids that—again, reminiscent of the snappy language in comic books—snoop, spy and survey with one eye toward the serious and the other toward make-believe. Request this at your next bar mitzvah.

—Bob Gendron

Bop Kabbalah: The Cossack Who Smelt Of Vodka; (Conversation With) Ghosts; Snout; The Synagogue Detective; After All That Has Happened; Talmudic Breakbeat; Exchanging Pleasantries With A Wall; The Voice That Led Us Here And Then Waltzed/Hobbled Away. (50:58)

Personnel: Ben Holmes, trumpet; Ken Thompson, bass clarinet; Ty Citerman, electric guitar, prepared guitar, electronics; Adam D Gold, drums.

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OUTSIDERS

GUTBUCKET'S TY CITERMAN

BY VINCENT DEMASI

Citerman (far left) and crew
at Brooklyn's famed Northsix.

"THE TITLE OF *SLUDGE TEST* [CANTALOUPE] was inspired by a high school science lab," says Gutbucket's Ty Citerman about his band's new CD. "You were given a Petri dish filled with what the teacher called sludge, and the test was determining what your sludge was comprised of."

Performing my own sludge test on the New York quartet's kinetic punk jazz opuses reveals an explosive concoction containing lethal doses of Ornette Coleman, King Crimson, John Zorn, Black Sabbath, Stravinsky, and Fugazi.

"We've got pretty eclectic influences," acknowledges Citerman, "and I think that actually puts us more in the jazz tradition than if we played straight-ahead pop. When jazz was originally created, the musicians were pillaging all different styles, and offering their own warped takes on the popular music of the day—which is essentially what we're trying to do."

The liner notes to *Sludge Test* credit you with "playing three or four guitars" and "prepared guitar."

The "three or four guitars" references the

Akai E2 Headrush pedal I use to do real-time overdubs. You can hear it on the 7/4 groove at the end of "Punkass Rumbledink," where I layered four different parts, one at a time. As for "prepared guitar," I copped that idea from Fred Frith. It involves using "found objects" to get sounds that can't be achieved with a typical rig. My ES-335 has a trapeze tailpiece, so I'll stick stuff like tuning forks or metal scraps in the strings behind the bridge. For the slide solo on "Money Management for a Better Life," I wove a screwdriver between the strings.

Your music sometimes sounds chaotic, but I suspect most of it is meticulously arranged and composed.

That's definitely true. We're certainly not a pop band, but we structure songs like pop songs. The songs on *Sludge Test* are polytonal and in odd time signatures, but they're short and cohesive.

When you solo in odd time, do you count in your head, or can you feel it the way most musicians feel 4/4?

I used to make up practice exercises, and

I remember working out a solo for one of our early songs called "Tango Abstractions" that had alternating measures of 6/4 and 7/4. But now, I've internalized playing in five, seven, and nine, so I can use my ears and intuition—instead of just my intellect—to approach songs in those meters.

What inspired you to cover Olivier Messiaen's "Danse de la Fureur, pour les Sept Trumpeters"?

It's the only section from his *Quatuor pour la Fin du Temps* (Quartet for the End of Time), an eight-part suite written in 1941 while he was in a Nazi prisoner of war camp, where the instruments play in unison. It was originally scored for clarinet, violin, cello, and piano because that's what was available to him, and we felt it would be a powerful statement if we amplified it and gave it drums. The biggest challenge was the rhythms, because it doesn't have a time signature—it's just in one—and it's built on melodic motifs that are elongated, developed, restated, and morphed. We practiced for eight months before performing it, and it expanded my concept of what melody could be about. It was like a 20th Century music boot camp! ■



TY CITERMAN

una nuova prospettiva sul klezmer

di Alain Drouot
foto Juan-Carlos Hernández

Tipico ragazzo della periferia americana, il chitarrista Ty Citerman ha usato i suoi anni formativi per assorbire gli idiomi che hanno modellato il suo percorso musicale. Il quartetto di lungo corso Gutbucket e progetti più recenti come il collettivo Collapse Guitar Quartet o ancora il suo Bop Kabbalah sono tutti informati a svariati generi che si sovrappongono per trasformarsi in un unico paesaggio, lasciando spazio pure a humor e irriverenza, se non iconoclastia.

Da quanto ti interessi alla musica ebraica?

Sono cresciuto andando in sinagoga. Per buona parte dei miei anni scolastici, ogni domenica sono andato alla scuola religiosa. Era una sinagoga riformata in modo piuttosto liberale. Non ero uno stretto osservante. Facevamo musica ogni settimana e imparavo i canti. Allora negli Stati Uniti molta musica ebraica era presa dalla musica folk per essere suonata nelle sinagoghe riformate. Di conseguenza la musica era molto cantabile. Dato che adoro cantare da quando ero bambino, mi piaceva molto quel mix di canzoni ebraiche e inglesi. Da bambino non sapevo cosa fosse il klezmer ma ero regolarmente esposto alla musica ebraica.

Hai fatto in modo che il tuo interesse crescesse?

Ho avuto il mio *bar mitzvah* ma, come adolescente fatto, non ero molto coinvolto da quel mondo. Ero più interessato al jazz e al soul americano, l'*r&b* e la musica rock. Perciò, dopo i vent'anni sono tornato ad imparare la musica ebraica. Appena iniziai a suonare professionalmente, feci qualche lavoro nelle sinagoghe, in parte perché conoscevo la musica fin da bambino e in parte perché era un lavoro interessante. Stando a New York, potevo anche seguire musicisti come John Zorn o The Klezmatics che avevano nuova presa sulla musica ebraica.

Cosa ha fatto scattare la molla per decidere di avviare un progetto legato a questa musica?

Era un pensiero fisso da svariati anni. Negli ultimi 15 anni il gruppo Gutbucket mi ha impegnato attivamente con tournée e incisioni – anche altri progetti mi hanno impegnato. Quindi la mia energia creativa è stata a lungo concentrata su Gutbucket. Ma come musicista ebreo, l'idea di impegnarmi creativamente con la musica ebraica era sempre irresistibile. Per me equivale ad una sorta di auto-esplorazione. Nel 2012 l'attività di Gutbucket ha cominciato a diminuire e ho pensato che fosse giunto il momento di scrivere della musica per un gruppo diverso che si dedicasse alla musica ebraica. Allora iniziai a pensare alla strumentazione e alle persone che mi sarebbe piaciuto coinvolgere. Iniziai pure ad abbozzare idee per vedere dove tutto potesse condurmi.

Gutbucket abbraccia tre quarti di Bop Kabbalah: come mai non hai usato tutta la band?

Gutbucket è un collettivo, ognuno scrive musica separatamente. Per Bop Kabbalah ho dovuto pensarci su un attimo prima di essere sicuro che avevo le persone giuste. Sebbene i musicisti di Gutbucket siano meravigliosi ed io ami suonare con loro, avevo bisogno di un taglio fra quella band e quest'altro pro-

[TRANSLATION OF JAZZCOLOURS FEATURE CONTINUES ON FOLLOWING PAGES]

A typical boy from American suburbia, guitarist Ty Citerman used his formative years to absorb the idioms that have shaped his musical journey. The longtime quartet Gutbucket and more recent projects such as the Collapse Guitar Quartet or even his Bop Kabbalah are all steeped in various genres that overlap to become a unique landscape, leaving plenty space for humor and irreverence, if not iconoclasm.

What brought you to play Jewish music?

I grew up going to synagogue, and for most of my school years, every Sunday I went to religious school. It was a reform synagogue, a pretty liberal setting, and I wasn't very observant. We had music every week, and a lot of that Jewish music was inspired by U.S. folk music - consequently, the music was very singable. I've loved singing since I was a child, and I loved that mix of Jewish and English songs. As a child I didn't know what klezmer was, but I was regularly exposed to this other Jewish music.

Did your interest in Judaism grow? What about music in general?

I had my Bar Mitzvah, but as an older teenager, I was not very involved in the synagogue. I was more interested in jazz and American soul, R & B, and rock music. But then in my 20's, I returned to Jewish music, because when I started playing music professionally, I did some work in synagogues - in part because I knew the music as a child, and in part because it was an interesting job. And being in New York, I could also follow musicians such as John Zorn and The Klezmatics who had been exploring new sounds in Jewish music.

What triggered the decision to initiate a project related to this music?

I had the thought many years ago, but over much of the past 15 years, my group Gutbucket has kept me actively engaged with tours and recordings. So that's where much of my creative energy went. But as a Jewish musician, the idea to engage creatively with Jewish music was always there, in part as a kind of musical self-exploration. So in 2012, Gutbucket became a bit less busy, and I thought it was time to write some music for a different group that was dedicated to Jewish music. Then I began to think about an instrumentation and people that I wanted to involve. I started sketching ideas to see where it all might lead me.

Gutbucket is three quarters of Bop Kabbalah: how come you did not use the whole band?

Gutbucket is a collective, and everyone writes their music separately. In Bop Kabbalah I had to think about it for a moment before being sure I had the right people. Although the musicians in Gutbucket are wonderful and I love playing with them, I needed to distinguish between that band and this new project that became Bop Kabbalah. Gutbucket has a certain dynamic, and Bop Kabbalah operates differently because I'm the band's leader. Not that I have to be the boss, but it's different if I'm writing all the music. Obviously I look to each member of the group for some feedback, but I set the tone and push the vision of the group.

It does not seem that the guitar plays a big role in Jewish music. How do you reconcile this with Bop Kabbalah?

It depends on the type of Jewish music that you're considering. If you're talking about traditional klezmer music of Eastern Europe, then in that context, the guitar is not an important tool. I'm not an expert on the history of the guitar in klezmer music, but this is what I know. However, in recent years, there have been people exploring new ideas, like Jeff Warschauer, or groups like Hasidic New Wave. So there is quite a bit of fusion involving the guitar. Bop Kabbalah does not pose a problem of authenticity or of reverence towards the way that things are supposed to be. I wanted to play guitar with the group, not just be the composer. And I wanted to write for a group that had the bass clarinet because it has a wider range than the clarinet, which is traditionally found in klezmer. Consequently, the instrumentation is not what you'd expect from a Jewish music group. On the other hand, in the melodic material, there's definitely something that's connected to Jewish music. It's a new perspective on Jewish music using my own original material...though on occasion we'll throw a cover song or two into our live set.

You seem to have a fondness for mixing genres: where does this come from?

By being a music lover and having an open mind about the music I hear. I don't care to play according to genre definitions in music - they're fairly collapsible. Take for example indie-rock - even in that world, there's not a single sound or aesthetic: there are rock bands who have no guitar or vocals, but instead there's a cello. There's a lot of exploration in that world. So it doesn't really matter to me if you don't play music that's clearly defined. What's important is to play music that's fun and interesting and challenging.

Can you describe the creative process as it unfolds within the Collapse Guitar Quartet?

The band's four members [Yoshie Fruchter, Eyal Maoz, Jon Goldberger and myself] all write and arrange music. We haven't done any tours but we are currently working on putting together a recording. Each of us brings pieces that we wrote and arranged for the group. Some are strictly composed, others have some flexibility in the arrangement. And then we work them out together. But there are plenty of sections that feature improvisation.

Is this band somehow influenced by the avant-garde guitarist Glenn Branca?

Not directly. I played a piece of his a while ago and I loved it. I think it was Symphony No. 13 for a hundred electric guitars: it had a power and a synergy that was irresistible. But I think Collapse doesn't focus so much on the strength of the electric guitars, though the identity of the band is still forming. I believe that much more direct influence comes from the Fred Frith Guitar Quartet, a group that I love. That connection is much more evident.

How do you explain humor as a constant of your music?

On good days I think I have a pretty decent sense of humor. Sometimes this works its way into my music. Many times humor is conveyed by lyrics, but that's not what I do. There are composers and instrumentalists who express humor and a certain playfulness in their sound: Frank Zappa is one, Fred Frith another. Sometimes Thelonious Monk's playing was eccentric, even ironic. I think it's great when music can elicit laughter, among other things. I try not to worry about being silly. I also try not to worry about being serious when necessary.

You wrote a piece called Murakami for Gutbucket's album "Flock." How important is literature in your work?

I like reading. I don't always have the time to do what I want, but I like reading when I can. I worked on "Murakami" after reading his book "What I Talk About When I Talk About Running," a play on the short story by Raymond Carver, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love". Murakami's book makes a connection between running a marathon and writing a novel. Literature is a great source for ideas, and for me it's great to be inspired by other art forms. I can also take ideas from paintings or poems. Murakami's book attracted me because of his perspective on what you do and the exercise of patience in doing so.

What programs are there for the residence that Gutbucket has at Stone this coming November?

I'm just about to send out our final draft for the event calendar! We're making a record of new material for release in 2015. We have a new project with the string quartet JACK Quartet. We'll present the world premiere of another new project with the percussion trio Tigue. We'll also have a night of live music and film, with two of our rarely performed live scores. Then we'll have the Gutbucket Chamber Orchestra on the final night, when we'll play extended versions of our pieces, with special guests.

You are from St. Louis. As you became interested in music and jazz in particular, were you aware of the contribution of the Black Artist Group? Did it influence you?

I was not aware of them as a boy. But after I moved to New York, I learned about both the Black Artist Group and the AACM, another important organization from the Midwest. There are several artists from St. Louis that have been important for me: Grant Green, Lester Bowie and, obviously, Miles Davis. I left St. Louis at 18 - I was a kid in the suburbs with a limited interest in the world of jazz in St. Louis... even though I loved music and kept my eyes and ears open. I now realize the significance of the avant garde jazz from St. Louis, but while I was living there I was a bit young and sheltered, and interested in other things.

Who are the people that have been important for your musical development?

There are countless people I've played with or seen in concert. I always learned a lot in the groups that I've been a part of too. When I was 14-15 years old I was playing in a band led by a guy two or three years older than me, and I learned a lot there. Then, after I moved to New York, I studied guitar with Chris Rosenberg, who had an extraordinary influence on me. He played with Ornette Coleman & Prime Time, among many others. I hadn't taken steady guitar lessons since I was in middle school, so Chris gave me a sense of how to take myself seriously as a guitarist and musician. He encouraged me to nurture my strengths and work on problem areas in my playing. This helped me become a professional musician and [figure out] how to organize my time and my thoughts. This is at the top of the things I learned from him... More recently, I felt really honored to receive the invitation from John Zorn to record this project for Tzadik Records. The first time I met John was when he and I were both playing at the Warsaw Summer Jazz Days Festival in 2003. After his concert with Naked City, I went backstage to introduce myself. We stayed in touch and he had Gutbucket play at a festival that he curated at Tonic in 2004 or 2005.

What criteria do you use to decide to work in a group of others?

I love working with people doing interesting and creative music - people who take creative risks and with whom I'm having fun playing. I also consider what contribution I could make to the music. But lately most of my attention has turned to Bop Kabbalah, Gutbucket and Collapse Guitar Quartet. I've done some work as a sideman, but in recent months I haven't been touring with anyone else. I'm also a father - my wife and I had our second child last year. And having a second child, composing, recording a new body of songs, forming a new group - all this didn't leave me much time to do anything else! It might be different in a year or two. I'm spending some time writing chamber music and we'll see where that goes. I'm trying to spend more time composing for groups in which I don't play.

When did you discover that music would be your career? And what would you have done otherwise?

It's interesting because it's not what I envisioned when I was 5 or 10 years old. I finally had a clearer picture of being a full-time musician in my early 20's, when I was working with Chris [Rosenberg]. I got a sense of how I could continue, and pursuing music became less romantic and more realistic as a life project. There's a bunch of things that I'm interested in, but it's different if you have to think about doing something everyday. Before going to college I wanted to be an architect. If I had to change careers today, I don't know- maybe I would be a radical socialist economist. I could imagine doing something very different and continuing to have an interesting life, but I don't have plans to change course anytime soon! So interview me in twenty years and let's see what I'm up to.

Ty Citerman [CD REVIEW]: The guitarist Ty Citerman made himself a name as a member of the jazz-punk quartet Gutbucket. Taking advantage of a switch in the band, he has been able to focus on the project named Bop Kabbalah, which gives him the opportunity to develop ideas inspired by Jewish music, an intrinsic part of his cultural heritage. The composition of the band is strangely similar to that of Gutbucket: Citerman is joined by drummer Adam D Gold and Ken Thomson, who plays bass clarinet here. The combo is further defined by trumpeter Ben Holmes, with whom Citerman has worked on and off in the past. The comparison with Gutbucket is therefore inevitable, but the overall impression is that Bop Kabbalah is more controlled and meditative as well as less raucous and rude. Perhaps because the goal of Citerman is mainly to show his ability as a composer rather than a guitarist. In fact, as an instrumentalist, he often remains more in the background, leaving most of the solos to Thomson and Holmes, although everyone is active during the passages of improvisation, or harmonizing or supporting the soloist. Many pieces begin with a simple and effective melody which can also be capricious, as in "Talmudic Breakbeat." They usually do not follow the structure of orthodox song. "Snout" even includes freely improvised segments that make extensive use of extended techniques. And it also shows that the idea of replacing the clarinet - klezmer instrument par excellence - with the bass clarinet is more than effective. The powerful exaltation of the trumpet's ringing tone offers plenty of colors and shades.

Citerman makes full use of the sounds available to him, for example in "(Conversation with) Ghosts," an exercise in which the unison passages alternate with melodic counterpoint. But with "Exchanging pleasantries with a Wall," the band takes another path: an exploratory piece impregnated with electronic effects. In this one, Citerman, Holmes and Thomson gradually increased the level of intensity, while Gold shoots from all cylinders before they all join together in a grand conclusion. It will be interesting to see what the next step of this band will be.