

= Gravity ( Fred Frith album ) =

Gravity is a 1980 solo album by English guitarist , composer and improviser Fred Frith from Henry Cow and Art Bears . It was Frith 's second solo album and his first since the demise of Henry Cow in 1978 . It was originally released in the United States on LP record on The Residents 's Ralph record label and was the first of three solo albums Frith made for the label .

Gravity was recorded in Sweden , the United States and Switzerland and featured Frith with Swedish Rock in Opposition group Samla Mamma's Manna on one side of the LP , and Frith with United States progressive rock group The Muffins on the other side . Additional musicians included Marc Hollander from Aksak Maboul and Chris Cutler from Henry Cow .

Gravity has been described as an avant @-@ garde " dance " record that draws on rhythm and dance from folk music across the world . AllMusic called it one of the most important experimental guitar titles from Fred Frith .

= = Background = =

Fred Frith was a classically @-@ trained violinist who turned to playing blues guitar while at school . In 1967 he went to Cambridge University where he and fellow student , Tim Hodgkinson formed the English avant @-@ rock group Henry Cow . Frith and Hodgkinson remained with the band until its demise in 1978 . After the release of Henry Cow 's second album in May 1974 , Frith recorded his debut solo album , Guitar Solos ( 1974 ) , which featured unaccompanied and improvised experimental rock music played on prepared guitars by Frith without any overdubbing . Guitar Solos was well received by music critics , and was voted one of the best albums of 1974 by NME .

During the recording of Henry Cow 's sixth album in January 1978 , musical differences arose within the group over the prevalence of song @-@ oriented material on the album . Some wanted purely instrumental compositions , while others , including Frith , favoured songs . As a compromise Frith and the band 's drummer , Chris Cutler released the songs on an album Hopes and Fears ( 1978 ) under the name Art Bears , while the instrumental tracks , plus others recorded later were released on Henry Cow 's last album , Western Culture ( 1979 ) . Art Bears went on to make two more albums of songs .

After Henry Cow broke up , Frith moved to New York City in 1979 where he became involved with a number of musical projects , including a new solo album . To make a more " immediate " record after the intensities of Henry Cow and Art Bears , Frith turned his attention to world folk and dance music . In Hopes and Fears he had " rediscovered the joys of song @-@ form " , and it was the song " The Dance " that Frith and Cutler wrote for that album that inspired the making of Gravity . Frith said in a BBC interview :

Frith had been listening to music from other cultures , particularly Eastern Europe since the mid @-@ 1970s . He made no attempt to notate what he heard , but absorbed it and let it find its way later into his own music . On Gravity Frith mixed up all these different musical styles to make new songs out of them .

= = Recording = =

Gravity was the first of a series of projects Frith did for The Residents 's record label Ralph Records . He had recorded with The Residents in the late 1970s and early 1980s , and appeared on several of their albums .

Frith used two backing bands for Gravity , Swedish Rock in Opposition group Samla Mamma's Manna and United States progressive rock group The Muffins . He recorded side one of the LP record with Samla Mamma's Manna at Norrgården Nyvå in Uppsala , Sweden , with additional recording at Sunrise Studios , Kirchberg , Switzerland in August 1979 . Side two of the LP was recorded with The Muffins at Catch @-@ a @-@ Buzz Studio in Rockville , Maryland , United States in November 1979 , with additional recording at Sunrise Studios in Switzerland in January 1980 . Frith recorded two additional tracks with The Muffins , " Vanity , Vanity " and " Dancing in Sunrise ,

Switzerland " , but they were omitted from the album due to space constraints . They appeared later on The Muffins 's 1985 album , Open City .

Many of the tracks on Gravity consist of melodic lines woven into complex rhythmic structures taken from different folk music cultures . The time signatures are not the standard 3 / 4 or 4 / 4 , but more complex signatures like 15 / 8 . Frith described in an interview how he arrived in Uppsala with his carefully written music sheets , only to find that Samla Mammass Manna could not read music . But when he played the music to them , he was " stunned by their ability to hear the details , especially the rhythmic details , that I had written . "

The title of the album came from a 1937 quote by Curt Sachs ( printed on the back of the album sleeve ) in which he described dance as " the victory over gravity " . In 1980 Ralph Records also released a single from the album , " Dancing in the Street " b / w " What a Dilemma " . It did not chart on any of the major music charts .

= = Music = =

Frith called Gravity a " dance album " , not in the disco / funk sense of its day , but a collection of " dance music " drawn from cultures around the world . The album features an array of rock , folk and jazz instruments , plus field recordings , clapping and " whirling " , and has been described as a " musical hybridization " of " Latin percussion , calypso festivity , eastern @-@ tinged percussion [ and ] Klezmer @-@ like celebration " .

" The Boy Beats the Rams " opens Gravity with a burst of laughter followed by some tap dancing , " random " percussion and Frith 's " distinctive keening " violin . On " Spring Any Day Now " Frith mixes a bossa nova rhythm with a North African melody . " Don 't Cry For Me " features Greek mandolin with heavy metal guitar . " Hands of the Juggler " draws on Middle Eastern folk dance , " Slap Dance " is a Serbian " folk romp " , and " Career in Real Estate " is in the tradition of a Scottish fiddle tune .

" Dancing in the Street " is a " de / reconstruction " of Martha and the Vandellas 's 1964 hit that includes a " bizarrely harmonised guitar " playing the song 's melody over a " boiling mass of feedback " and tape manipulation . According to the album 's sleeve notes , this track also includes a recording of " Iranian demonstrators celebrating the capture of American hostages " .

" Crack in the Concrete " features an e @-@ bowed guitar over " edgy , dissonant chords " and a " massed kazoo choir of horns " that presages Frith 's experimental rock band Massacre he formed in New York City in February 1980 . " Norrgården Nyvla " flows into " Year of the Monkey " which ends with a brief sample of the 13th Puerto Rico Summertime Band , " ten seconds of the real thing " according to the LP liner notes .

= = Reception and influence = =

In the January 1983 edition of Down Beat magazine , Bill Milkowski wrote that in contrast to Art Bears 's " bleak attitude " , Frith 's Gravity is a " truly joyous solo LP , [ ... ] an extremely warm , almost whimsical album " . Thomas Schulte at AllMusic described it as an " entertaining and multicultural pocket folk festival " and said it was " one of the most important guitar @-@ based , experimental guitar titles from the avant @-@ guitarist " . In a BBC Online review of Gravity , Peter Marsh called it " Absolutely essential " , adding that it " manages to be wildly eclectic yet avoids incoherence " . Brandon Wu of Ground and Sky said that despite his " relative indifference " to the album , one of Gravity 's great strengths is that it is both accessible and avant @-@ garde .

Gravity inspired a 2003 album Spring Any Day Now by David Greenberg and David McGuinness with the Concerto Caledonia . Subtitled " Music of 18th century Scotland and elsewhere " , the album includes covers of two tracks from Gravity , " Spring Any Day Now " and " Norrgården Nyvla " , and a track from Frank Zappa 's Roxy & Elsewhere ( 1974 ) , " Echidna 's Arf ( Of You ) " .

Frith continued his exploration of folk and dance music on his next album for Ralph Records , Speechless ( 1981 ) . As with Gravity , he recorded Speechless with two bands , French Rock in Opposition group Etron Fou Leloublan on one side of the LP , and Frith 's New York City group

Massacre on the other . The album included extensive tape manipulation , which was an ongoing passion of Frith 's at the time .

= = Live performances = =

In August 2012 Frith led a performance of Gravity in San Francisco , California entitled " Fred Frith and Friends play Gravity " . The performers were Frith , Dominique Leone , Jon Leidecker ( Wobbly ) , Aaron Novik , Ava Mendoza , Jordan Glenn , Kasey Knudsen , Lisa Mezzacappa and Marië Abe . Frith led two more performances of Gravity at Roulette in Brooklyn , New York City on 19 and 20 September 2013 , featuring Frith ( guitar / electric bass ) , Leone ( keyboards ) , Leidecker ( sampling ) , Novik ( clarinet / bass clarinet ) , Mendoza ( guitar ) , Abe ( accordion ) , Glenn ( drums ) , Knudsen ( alto saxophone ) , Mezzacappa ( bass ) , Kaethe Hostetter ( violin ) , and William Winant ( percussion ) .

Frith formed the Gravity Band in 2014 , comprising Frith ( conductor / guitar / bass ) , Hostetter ( violin ) , Knudsen ( saxophone ) , Novik ( clarinet ) , Abe ( accordion ) , Leidecker ( samples ) , Leone ( keyboards ) , Mendoza ( guitar ) , Mezzacappa ( bass ) , Glenn ( drums ) , Winant ( percussion ) , and Myles Boisen ( sound ) . They performed the album live at the 30th Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville in Canada in May 2014 , at the Music Meeting in Nijmegen , Netherlands in June 2014 , and at the Moers Festival in Germany , also in June 2014 .

= = Track listing = =

All tracks composed by Fred Frith except where noted .

= = = Original 1980 release = = =

= = = 1990 CD re @-@ issue bonus tracks = = =

= = Personnel = =

= = = Side one = = =

Fred Frith ? guitar , bass guitar , violin , extra percussion

Samla Mammas Manna :

Lars Hollmer ? piano , organ , accordion

Hans Bruniussen ? drums

Eino Haapala ? guitar , mandolin

Marc Hollander ? alto saxophone , clarinet

= = = = Guests = = = =

Olivia Bruynhooghe ? tap dancing , clapping

Chris Cutler ? snare drum and maracas ( track 3 ) , clapping

Tina Curran ? whirling , clapping

Catherine Jauniaux ? whirling , clapping

Frank Wuyts ? recorders ( track 6 ) , whirling , clapping

Michel Berckmans ? clapping

Etienne Conod ? clapping

Denis van Hecke ? clapping

Veronique Vincent ? clapping

===== Recording and production =====

Recorded at Norrgården Nyvla in Uppsala , Sweden and at Sunrise Studios , Kirchberg , Switzerland in August 1979 .

Gabriel Rosen ? engineer ( Sweden )

Etienne Conod ? engineer ( Switzerland )

===== Side two =====

Fred Frith ? guitar , bass guitar , violin , keyboards , drums ( tracks 1 @, @ 5 @, @ 7 )

The Muffins :

Dave Newhouse ? alto saxophone , organ ( track 4 )

Thomas Scott ? soprano saxophone ( track 6 )

Paul Sears ? drums ( tracks 1 @, @ 2 @, @ 4 @, @ 6 @, @ 8 )

Billy Swann ? bass guitar ( tracks 2 @, @ 4 @, @ 6 @, @ 8 )

Marc Hollander ? alto saxophone , bass clarinet

===== Guests =====

Hans Bruniussen ? drums ( track 4 )

Tina Curran ? subliminal bass guitar ( track 1 )

Frank Wuyts ? drums ( track 3 )

===== Recording and production =====

Recorded at Catch @-@ a @-@ Buzz Studio , Rockville , Maryland , United States in November 1979 and at Sunrise Studios , Kirchberg , Switzerland in January 1980 .

Thomas Scott and Colleen Scott ? engineers ( USA )

Etienne Conod ? engineer ( Switzerland )

===== Bonus tracks on 1990 CD re @-@ issue =====

Fred Frith ? bass guitar , guitar , violin , keyboards , drums , percussion

Marc Hollander ? soprano saxophone ( track 18 )

Chris Cutler ? drums ( tracks 15 ? 18 )

Frank Wuyts ? synthesiser ( track 18 )

Michel Berckmans ? oboe , bassoon ( track 18 )

Denis van Hecke ? cello ( track 18 )

Lindsay Cooper ? bassoon , oboe ( tracks 15 @, @ 16 )

Tim Hodgkinson ? alto saxophone ( track 15 )

Annemarie Roelofs ? trombone ( track 15 )

Dagmar Krause ? voice ( track 17 )

Tom Cora ? bass guitar , percussion ( track 19 )

===== Recording =====

Track 15 recorded at Sunrise Studios , Kirchberg , Switzerland in July ? August 1978 , previously unreleased ( an outtake from the Henry Cow Western Culture recording sessions )

Track 16 recorded at Kaleidophon , London in March 1978 , originally released on Hopes and Fears ( 1978 ) by Art Bears

Track 17 recorded at Sunrise Studios , Kirchberg , Switzerland in January 1978 , originally released on Hopes and Fears ( 1978 ) by Art Bears

Track 18 recorded at Sunrise Studios , Kirchberg , Switzerland in January 1979 , originally released on Un Peu de l'Âme des Bandits ( 1980 ) by Aksak Maboul

Track 19 recorded at Sunrise Studios , Kirchberg , Switzerland in January 1984 , originally released on Learn to Talk ( 1984 ) by Skeleton Crew

Track 20 recorded at Noise , New York City in September 1988 , previously unreleased

= = = Artwork = = =

Alfreda Bengé ( Robert Wyatt 's wife ) ? album cover artwork on the original LP record

= = CD reissues = =

In 1990 East Side Digital and RecRec Music re @-@ issued Gravity on CD with six bonus tracks .  
In 2002 Fred Records issued a remastered version of the original Gravity with no bonus tracks .