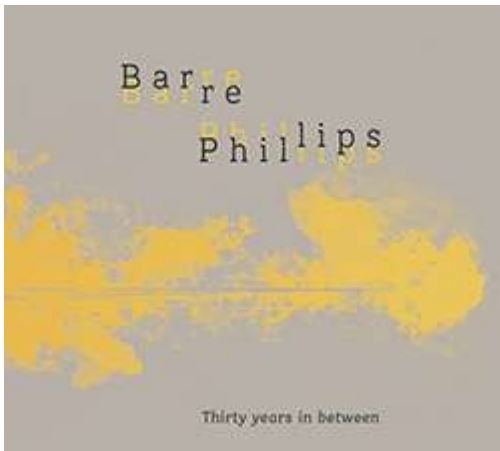




## Barre Phillips: Thirty Years In Between (Victo)

Review by John Eyles

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Although bassist Barre Phillips has a discography chock full of remarkable collaborations with a stellar array of musicians such as Derek Bailey, Paul Bley, Peter Brötzmann, Lee Konitz, Chris McGregor, Evan Parker and John Surman, including two-bass duos with the likes of Barry Guy, Dave Holland, Peter Kowald and Joelle Léandre, it seems highly likely that he will be most remembered as the pioneer of the solo bass recording; beginning with *Journal Violone*, recorded in London, in 1968, the first of its kind, Phillips released a steady stream of solo bass albums, some recorded in concert, some studio-recorded.

*Thirty Years In Between* is the latest such release. As its title suggests, it is a double CD consisting of two albums which were recorded thirty years apart; *Camouflage*, recorded live at Western Front, Vancouver, Canada, on May 12th 1989, was previously issued by Victo in 1990, while *Ahoy!* was recorded on May 17th 2019 at the thirty-fifth International Music Festival at Victoriaville, Quebec, Canada, and is here released for the first time. The album's gatefold sleeve opens up to reveal a photograph of Phillips onstage with his bass at each recording; born in 1934, the bassist has aged so well that, without reading their captions, it would be very difficult to distinguish which photo is which.

Much the same could be said of the music from the two concerts; it has not noticeably aged, and Phillips' playing is showing no tell-tale signs of his advancing years. As ever, he shows himself to be a master of his instrument, capable of extracting an impressive range of sounds and textures from it. On the original *Journal Violone*, there were just two tracks, each filling an LP side; it was not long until Phillips was using a greater number of shorter tracks. That's how it is here, *Camouflage* having six tracks with the title track being the longest at just over sixteen minutes, *Ahoy!* having seven tracks of between four and eight minutes. All thirteen tracks are solo bass music, not bass solos; rather than being a short bass interlude, each track is a fully formed piece of music with its own particular structure, melodies, harmonies, sound and mood, meaning that it can stand alone on its own merits. As such, this album is recommended to anyone who enjoys good music, be it on bass or otherwise.

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