



Phish
The Story of the Ghost
(Elektra)

So you think that being labeled a jam band means every song you write has to be a 15-minute marathon? Whatever. Since Phish's first studio release in two years, *The Story of the Ghost*, clocks in at only 50 minutes, the band seems inclined to disagree. There are 13 previously unreleased songs, all but one under five minutes, on its shortest, tightest release to date. From the fade-in of "Ghost," which opens the album, to the culminating, calming "End of Session," *Story* weaves a musical narrative with subtle, overlapping layers within layers within layers.

Many of the songs were constructed from recordings of experimental, improvisational jams, inspired melodies and lyrics culled from poetry by lyricist Tom Marshall and collaborative writing efforts by Marshall and guitarist Trey Anastasio. A truly collective effort, *Story* reestablishes Mike Gordon's bass as a dominant force (most notably in the inherently funky "Moma Dance"), brings drummer Jon Fishman to the foreground and features keyboardist Page McConnell's vocals on several songs, including "Wading in the Velvet Sea," one of the most beautiful Phish songs ever. The album's first single, "Birds of a Feather," has already received significant radio airplay. "Guyute," the oldest and longest song, closely resembles the tune fans have already heard onstage, but it seems out of place here.

Overall, *Story* successfully continues Phish's tradition of redefining itself and not putting out the same thing twice. However, for fans who are familiar with longer, looser versions of these songs from live performances, this new album will read less like a complete story and more like the Cliffs Notes. And as every good student knows, Cliffs Notes should be used in conjunction with, not in place of, the actual work.—

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