

In his debut album as a band leader — *Proxemic Studies: Volume I* — the Canadian guitarist Mike McCormick, based in Oslo, presents a set of tunes exploring various manifestations of his most intimate and personal side. Interestingly, the album's production is embodied in a curious story that initially involved McCormick's creation of a variety of technical studies for electric guitar — used as a way of surpassing his performative limitations - which were subsequently merged with letter texts, emails and messages, which he kept and which had been sent to people with whom he had romantic relationships. Thus, this is a profoundly intimate and introspective, atmospheric and emotive album, where the guitarist examines the emotional 'spaces' created in his life along with Laura Swankey on the voice, Emily Denison on trumpet and Knut Kvifte Nesheim on drums and vibraphone.

With a personal and introspective nature, *Proxemic Studies: Volume I* can be seen as a journey through the intricacies of the range of primary emotions — fear, sadness, rage, disgust, surprise and joy — that we, human beings, experience throughout our lives. In the presentation notes, one notices that the compositions “are intensely personal reflections about human intimacy that describes the unabashed beauty of unconditional love, the bitterness of the broken heart and the volatility of passion.” Thus, *Proxemic Studies: Volume I* is an exploration of the human emotionality, which is cloaked in poetic beauty, where one feels rock elements — for example on “madness”, the album's most aggressive tune, where one feels the revolt that emerges after lying — and where, predominantly, jazz is mixed with contemporary music as to form densely emotive sound aesthetics. A special mention goes to the tune “alvorada” that, with such a Portuguese title, draws a calm awakening: the lift of the damp and opaque fog — symbol of the mystery and the unconscious — gradually replaced by the phosphorescent sun — symbol of life and power — that gives us strength to face the surprises and anxieties that the day will bring.

*Proxemic Studies: Volume I* is a curious work, thoroughly creative and original, the result of an unconventional and unorthodox compositional process, and which presents an interesting narrative that proves that even routines that are, in the beginning, as mundane and monotonous as technical exercises for guitar, can be used as a base of artistic and musical creation, when combined with emotionally intense memories. A lesson to remember.