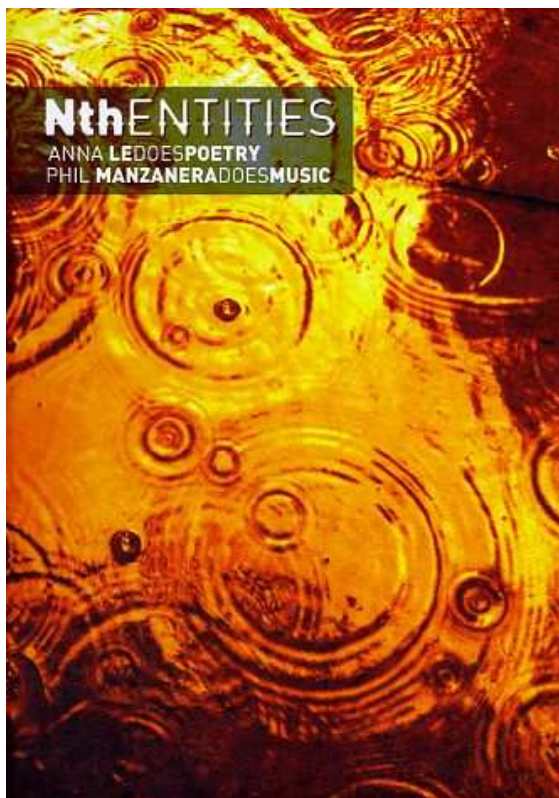


## FAME Review: Anna Le / Phil Manzanera - Nth Entities

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## Nth Entities

[Anna Le](#) / [Phil Manzanera](#)

[Expression Records](#) - EXPD30

Available from [Expression Records](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange  
by **Mark S. Tucker**  
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*Nth Entities* is the sorta beast that oft doth not emerge into the light of day, usually with excellent reason. Rarely do poetry readings or rants underwritten by music succeed. I can't tell you how many discs I've cringed through—most notably, not long ago, a real stinker by Mick Farren, one-time provocateur radical now long beyond his day and tooth and showing it badly (especially with that ridiculous puff piece "conspiracy" book he wrote on the CIA). Can't recall the name of either of his messes and don't really want to, but, no, slammed poetry and music have a long, disjointed, rather aromatic history. HOWEVER, the moment I glommed Manzanera's name here, I thought, "Hmmm, I know Robert Wyatt would probably do some really nice stuff, even beyond those Michael Mantler recitations he records in this direction, so.....why not Phil?"

First of all, the packaging was done right. A small hardcover book, Le's poems transcribed in single-page and fold-out arrangements with artwork, ironic photos, artist photos, and rain puddle shots resembling neutrino baths accompanied by a CD housed in the back, the art direction is a perfect blend of the striking, the standard, and the experimental...as is the music to one degree or another. *All the While*, the project's opener, a political discourse blooming with imagery, carries a very Harold Budd-ish sonority with a touch of Glass. Le recites with a studious British accent, or something very close to it (seems to be a bit of Jamaican in there as well, though I could be out to lunch on that, my recognition of accents not the best). Somebody made the wise choice not to push Anna's voice up front but instead embed it within the soundfield, one more instrument among several others, engineer/drum programmer Mike Boddy indexing everything nicely. All to the good.

A few of Le's pieces are homages to creatives Jimi Hendrix (*Jimi, Jimi Reprise*) and Stevie Wonder (*The Wonder of Wonder*) and are more worshipful, however, than certainly should be the case (*Forget the Who*, says Le in referencing Hendrix, and I don't think Jimi would ever suggest that, he loved and respected those guys) not to mention ahistorical in several respects. That's the poet's prerogative...but also fair game for criticism. Hendrix is THE guitar God but not for the pseudo-religious or underlying chauvinistic reasons Le suggests. Manzanera thinks that "Jimi would have approved" of this, but I disagree. He would've smiled, but that wouldn't necessarily have been a stamp on the sentimentationism, and Le invokes that sort of emotive arrogation more than once. As an element of sound, Le's voice works well, but the more I listen, the less accepting I become of her fangirlisms, as with Lee Scratch Perry—again, hers to aver, mine to rebuff, and I do so while tilting an ear of interest.

I think it's probably the steely glint in Anna's voice that's most attractive. It keeps her afloat as righteously psychedelic music swirls everywhere, sometimes, as in *Mountain Top Dreaming*, with a more Latinate / bossa / calypso mellifluidity prevailing. In places, her exposition is thought provoking:

*Black History Month the event is a partial nonsense  
and a dinghy concurrently: a national Fuck-buddy  
because long term, it's not where you want to be,  
but in the interim it's giving you something you need*

...Marxist and anarchistic, more good stuff. Saxist and wondrously cogent political writer and philosophical cut-up Gilad Atzmon appears on that cut, appropriately. *The Wonder of Wonder* has a very cool beat to it, Le's words falling in behind, Manzanera bedecking the milieu with ornamentalia ranging from Earth, Wind, & Fire to pop be-bop to Pepe Mtoto. In sum, this is a far better exposition in the milieu than many preceding it. It has its flaws, as mentioned, but here's something that will probably spell

certain doom regardless: the price tag is \$70. Yep, you read correctly: seventy big ones for a single disc and a small thin hardcover book. In this economy? Or ever? One needn't be Nostradamus to predict what's going to happen here.

### Track List:

- All the While
- Cali's Cautionary Tale
- My Nth Entities
- Jimi
- Lego Limbs
- The American/British Dream
- Scratch
- Vowel Play
- SOS
- Jimi Reprise
- The Wonder of Wonder
- Music All the While

All words written by Anna Le, all music by Phil Manzanera.

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