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SCOTT KINSEY 'WE SPEAK LUNIWAZ: THE MUSIC OF JOE ZAWINUL'
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Scott Kinsey is a jazz fusion keyboard wizard. During his illustrious career, he's covered a lot of musical ground and worked with many, many faces. I first became aware of him as the synth part (alongside the guitar-heroic Scott Henderson) of the fierce fusion four-piece, Tribal Tech. Outside of that, he's worked with Alphonso Johnson, Seamus Blake, John Scofield, John McLaughlin, Lalah Hathaway, Thundercat, Airto, Philip Bailey and, concluding an endless list to ensure I quickly get to the point...Joe Zawinul. In fact, he did a wee bit more than just work with Zawinul. He became Zawinul's protégé and their relationship developed to the extent that Zawinul personally requested that Kinsey should be the one he would trust to carry on his musical legacy. No small expectation that Kinsey has achieved in spades, not least via directing the Tony Zawinul-formed, Zawinul Legacy Band. With such deep Zawinul connections, it comes as no surprise that Kinsey could, and would, create an album of reimagined Zawinul music. He's joined by Hadrien Feraud on bass, Katisse Buckingham on saxophone/flute and drummer Gergö Borlai. Guest spots are taken by Yellowjackets bassist Jimmy Haslip, Weather Report percussionist Robert Thomas Jr. and Zawinul Syndicate percussionist Arto Tunçboyacıyan and drummer Michael Baker. All entirely conversant in the common language of Luniwaz!

A studio live version of "The Harvest" (Dialects, 1986) announces, off the bat, that although there's palpable love for the great man, the intention here isn't to play note-for-note/harmony-for-harmony/feel-for-feel covers. There's a new dynamic, different sonics, reharmonisation and a personal accent to the Luniwaz spoken. This "The Harvest" is a driving, slow-builder of a tune with Haslip, Borlai and Danny Carey (Y'know, from Tool!...on the Simmons kit), all bringing the

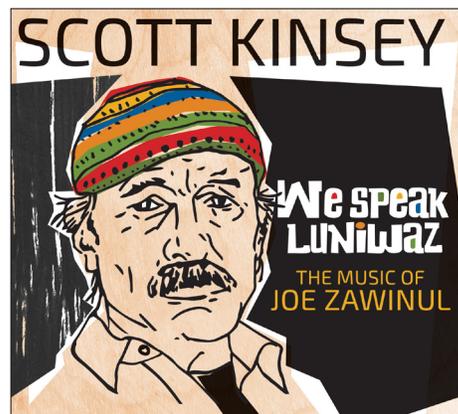
propelling jabs while Kinsey vocodes and Buckingham flutes playfully above the busyness and pure filth that is Haslip's mucky bass.

"Victims of the Groove" (Lost Tribes, 1992) features the energy and precision of Bobby Thomas Jr. spicing up the nailed-down, yet always fluid, rhythm of Borlai/Feraud. It has a looseness and depth-bringing layered aspect that the original doesn't.

Buckingham's back-in-the-day flow of "If I were you, I'd let the legendary Joe Zawinul empower you. Just the name alone can devour fools. 'cos it's powerful" leads the "Cucumber Slumber" (Mysterious Traveler, 1974) into his "World Citizen" rap. There's an early 90s optimistic groove about it all and Baker and Thomas Jr. feel great together.

An improvised take on a 15-20 year old Kinsey track called "We speak Luniwaz" pretty much brings together all things Zawinul; vocoder, ethnic chanting, popping synth, improvising that sounds composed. Borlai's driving metronome-with-feeling vibrates the track forward giving it an essential heartbeat that creates a reassuring, but creatively pressurised, space for Kinsey, Feraud and the soprano/voices to explore. "Black Market" (Black Market, 1976) initially runs slower than the original and feels nicely relaxed after "We speak Luniwaz", before kicking in to that riff and a slick tenor solo by Buckingham. It then branches out into an exotic Arto Tunçboyacıyan spirit vocal wander before gently running out of steam.

"Fast City" (Night Passage, 1980) is..errrr...FAST. It's pretty relentless with fantasy fusion doubling from Kinsey and Buckingham and some awesome Feraud fyah. The other original on the album, "Running the Dara Down", has, according to Kinsey, the essence of "Dara Factor" (Weather Report, 1982).



It's a builder – kinda throbby/dancey with some sweet, devotional Buckingham soprano and Thomas Jr. wooden flute.

"Port of Entry" (Weather Report, 1982) gets the full, fretless, Jaco homage treatment and very nice it is too.

"Between the Thighs" (Tale Spinnin', 1975) shifts effortlessly between gears and motifs while Borlai's fresh, inventive and occasionally fierce drumming intensifies and showers all it touches with a welcome ardour.

"Where the Moon Goes" (Procession, 1983) is an exuberant end to the album with Naina Kundu singing in blessed, vocoded Luniwaz, the band feeling bonded but loose and a trademark ethnic chant wraps it all up. It's celebratory and sums up the album's message to a tee.

I'm a fan of Joe Zawinul's intelligent, innovative work but for some reason, I don't listen to it that often. I think Scott Kinsey may have given me an insight as to why. This album brings an added vitality, looseness and a multi-pronged power attack that maybe I feel less in the original work. Naturally, some of that might be era-based sonics but, no matter, the point is that I really like this album and its energy and I appreciate it as a natural extension of the great man's work and language. As Kinsey says about working with Zawinul "with time, I also learned to speak Luniwaz, perhaps using my own personal dialect." Sounds about right to me.

Kinsey also added, "I'm pretty sure he would have loved this record." Reckon.