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ERIC PLATZ

Novel Approach

After a young Eric Platz heard Tony Williams' playing on Miles Davis' album *The Complete Concert: 1964 (My Funny Valentine + Four & More)*, he vowed to make his drumming just as musical as that of his hero. Platz may not have reached that wildly ambitious goal—after all, few drummers in jazz history could match Williams' musicality—but he has built a reputation as a tremendous player, trusted collaborator and acclaimed educator.

Platz, 42, expresses his musicality through versatility. He spent more than a dozen years playing, studying and teaching jazz, world music and other genres in Boston, and is now on the faculty of Brandon University in Manitoba. He has explored the full spectrum of jazz, recorded with Americana music singer-songwriters such as Carrie Rodriguez, and played Sephardic grooves in the group Asefa.

Now he has synthesized his diverse experiences into an extraordinary debut, *Life After Life* (Allos Documents).

"I really like the experience of communicating with people through music, [regardless of] the style of music," Platz explained. "If you're playing with musicians who really listen and are focused on sound and open to making a vibe happen as a group—that is just a magical feeling. That's really what I seek to do. At heart I'm an improviser."

Improvisational flexibility has facilitated both his playing style and his work as an educator. He took his first teaching assignment at a day school while he was attending the New England Conservatory, and juggled teaching and touring for more than a decade. But moving to the northern prairie necessitated adjustments. Because he lives a two-hour drive from the nearest major city, pick-up gigs are out of the question. So when he's not teaching, he plays with fellow faculty members and sits in

with a local big bands.

Additionally, he has joined multi-instrumentalist Jeff Presslaff's Complete Rebirth Of The Cool project. "Jeff's idea was to reconstruct Miles' *Birth Of The Cool* ensemble in terms of the instrumentation but commission composers from around Canada to write new music for that instrumentation," Platz said. "The only stipulation is that we're not trying to recreate that aesthetic; it's just taking that instrumentation and exploring that sonic palette a bit more."

But Platz's most ambitious and personal endeavor is his first solo CD, which incorporates rigorously plotted counterpoint, richly textured drones, folksy melodies, free interludes and trance-inducing Jamaican and Moroccan grooves.

His decision to shift from ensemble member to leader came after he invited Chicago-based clarinetist James Falzone, a fellow NEC alumnus, to participate in Brandon's chamber music series. Working with cellist Leanne Zacharias, the musicians found a chemistry that transcended genre. This led Platz to compose pieces that would be analogous to the visual images he envisioned when reading the novels of Cormac McCarthy and Kat Atkinson (whose 2013 bestseller is titled *Life After Life*).

"Eric had a real vision for how to use the studio and shape a narrative, sonically speaking," Falzone said. "I really appreciated the way he mixed and edited the stuff we recorded."

Falzone was sufficiently impressed to put the session out on his Allos Documents imprint. The album was released on Feb. 2, but Platz is already thinking ahead.

"I'm interested in bringing some of the people I know from the States and connecting them with people here in Canada," he said. "It would be great to do more of that and try to create links that didn't exist before."

—Bill Meyer



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KOFO - JIMMY SCOTT

On his new recording and his second as a leader, **Wanted**, the exceptional chromatic harmonica player Grégoire Maret once again finds himself moving away from his complementary duties as a sideman, and focusing on his role as a leader with his own musical vision. Naturally, Maret finds collaborating an important part of developing as an artist, but he is especially aware of the pressures imposed by the needs of others, and the necessity of removing these outside influences in order to get to one's core identity.

Going into the studio, Maret knew that he wanted to shape his music using all the tools at his disposal. He assembled a tight, core quartet of pianist Gerald Clayton, bassist James Genus and drummer Terri Lyne Carrington.



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