

JAZZ SIDE OF THE MOON

THE MUSIC OF PINK FLOYD

SAM YAHIEL ARI HOENIG MIKE MORENO SEAMUS BLAKE



SACD 338



1 BREATHE

Written by David J. Gilmour, George R. Waters, & Richard J. Wright
Hampshire House Pub Corp., The Richmond Organization (ASCAP)

2 ON THE RUN PART 1

Written by David J. Gilmour, George R. Waters, & Richard J. Wright
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3 TIME

Written by David J. Gilmour, Nicholas B. Mason,
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4 ANY COLOUR YOU LIKE

Written by David J. Gilmour, Nicholas B. Mason, & Richard J. Wright
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5 THE GREAT GIG IN THE SKY

Written by George R. Waters & Richard J. Wright
Hampshire House Pub Corp., The Richmond Organization (ASCAP)

6 MONEY

Written by George R. Waters
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7 US AND THEM

Written by George R. Waters & Richard J. Wright
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8 BRAIN DAMAGE

Written by George R. Waters
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9 ON THE RUN PART 2

Written by David J. Gilmour, George R. Waters, & Richard J. Wright
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Musicians

SAM YAHIEL

Hammond B3 Organ

MIKE MORENO

Electric &
Acoustic Guitar

ARI HOENIG

Drums

SEAMUS BLAKE

Tenor Saxophone

JAZZ SIDE OF THE MOON A NEW STANDARD

The manner in which jazz reinvents itself, transmuting any and all elements of popular music within its spiritual orbit, represents a significant aspect of its creative vitality as the music continues to flourish and evolve in the 21st century.

And while the face of popular music and the essential elements of the American song form have changed significantly since the 1920s, nothing has diminished the possibilities of a rhythmic renewal through the application of jazz phrasing.

To reinterpret and recast the original materials, with an ear towards evoking the spirit of the original, while fundamentally expanding upon the core elements in a collective improvisational manner, has been the defining *modus operandi* of the most creative jazz musicians since the parallel birth pangs of the jazz age, the broadcast age and the modern recording age.

And as such, *Jazz Side of the Moon* is a triumphant statement of how far jazz has come

both as an interpretative art and as a paradigm of recording purity. Still, in approaching the challenge of creating an audiophile recording project that evoked the modern jazz connections to an iconic popular recording, while doing justice in real time to the trend-setting production values achieved by Pink Floyd and producer Alan Parsons producer-straw boss Sam Yahel had to know that the possibilities for ignominious treacle were omnipresent.

However, the degree to which Hammond organist Sam Yahel and his hand-picked collaborators (tenor saxophonist Seamus Blake, electric guitarist Mike Moreno and drummer Ari Hoenig) evoke both the textural-thematic spirit of the original arrangements and sonic effects, while maintaining the overall conceptual arc and metaphysical implications of Pink Floyd's suite of songs, is remarkably powerful both as a jazz combo statement and as a purist, barebones audiophile recording—all the while reasserting the grace, power and musical nuance of the original materials. And the degree



to which *Jazz Side of the Moon* succeeds suggests that the possibilities for jazz expansion upon Pink Floyd's textured arrangements and ambient ensemble interplay were manifest all along, shining a new light upon the parallel streams of blues, gospel, big band swing and post-modernist elements by which the rock combo could inspire generations of listeners and musicians alike. It goes without saying that when approached with genuine love and respect, any such music in general, and *Dark Side of the Moon* in particular, may reflect a multiplicity of common tributaries.

"I had certain reservations at first," Yahel recalls, "and was concerned that this could be pretty jive. Then I went home and listened to the album for the first time since high school, and realized, 'Hey, there's a lot of meat on these bones.' Certainly the way they used effects was very fresh, and consistently served a musical purpose. And I wanted to capture that spirit using only the Hammond organ and a Leslie; it was our approximation of what they did in the studio, live in a purely acoustic environment, with no tricks. And engineer Nick Prout's enthusiasm for the original material inspired us to try and really approximate the arc of the song cycle; it was his idea to blend the tunes into each other—that was important for him—and when I heard how he did it, I was very much in accord with that approach. Likewise, with the Chesky Records approach to recording, employing a minimalist microphone set-up

[in New York's Saint Peter's-Church], my take on that is that it can work very effectively if the musicians are very conscious of playing to the room and to the mikes. Like they explained in a pep talk before the date, the quieter the drummer plays, the more the microphone will take in of everything else, which was a big factor in me calling Ari for the date, because he's a drummer who has a great rhythmic conception and a feeling for the overall sound he gets out of the instrument, without having to play everything at one volume level."

Of course it didn't hurt that the often hypnotic sense of texture and space Pink Floyd deploys in their masterpiece comes second nature to Sam Yahel, who consistently sidesteps the theatrical grandstanding and hyperbolic verbosity so endemic to practitioners of the mighty Hammond B-3, choosing to let space do his talking—all the better to fashion an elegant canvas of sensual timbres and serpentine elisions. Often throughout the course of *Jazz Side of the Moon*, Yahel sounds as though he wanted to disappear—as if the implications of his supple harmonic voice leading and spatial textures were best completed not on the keyboard manual, but in the listener's mind.

"Well, Lonnie Smith is really great at coaxing all kinds of alternative sounds out of the organ, but the organ is moving in that direction anyway. Not to say that the more traditional approach can't be great fun, and when guys

are really grooving. I love it, but someone like Larry Young was a huge influence on me, and he had a really lyrical feeling, so I kind of feel there's a need to bring something else to the table.

"Likewise, my two cents about the whole jazz standards issue is that I kind of feel as though musicians in the 1960s were doing treatments of music they grew up with or that was their parents' popular music. And I feel that if I were to carry on in that tradition, I would play something like "Woodstock" rather than "My Ship" because that's my parents' music or music I might have been exposed to at an impressionable age. So in terms of covering Pink Floyd, I think it makes sense, because this is something I would've been listening to in high school; I wasn't listening to George Gershwin tunes back then, although obviously that music is so rich and textured, it forms a significant aspect of everyone's musical vocabulary—mine included. Nor are my experiences especially unique; still, I believe that people should do music that's moving for them and their generation and not feel constrained to do something out of a misplaced sense of tradition."

Or as Sam confessed unto the estimable Ted Panken in *Downbeat*: "I used to have a hyperawareness of categories—what's straight-ahead, what's swing, what's not swing, what's legal to play in any given situation. But those distinctions have started to melt away. There's



good music and honest music, and then there's everything else."

And surely this all-star quartet's honest, unalloyed approach to *Dark Side of the Moon* contributes enormously to the grace and power of their interpretations on performances such as "Brain Damage," where the quartet take the tune at a deliriously slow tempo, wringing all manner of churchy hosannas and prayerful ruminations from the changes and melody, while on "Money" drummer Hoenig sets a funky tone for the ensemble with the kind of melodic, speech-like cadences you would more readily expect to hear from a keyboardist or violinist (which incidentally, were Ari's original instruments as a young boy, and you can readily discern how such musical attributes inform the tuning, dynamic range and conceptual arc he evinces with power and cunning reserve on the drums).

Likewise, the creative give-and-take between organist Yahel and electric guitarist



Moreno are one of the enduring joys of this recording session, and the manner in which they make electricity function in such a benign, unobtrusive manner in the decidedly acoustic environment of a church, while it won't be a revelation for those generations weaned on the electro-acoustic majesty of musicians such as Joe Zawinul, Pat Metheny and Bill Frisell, might come as a surprise to the more missionary-position inclined amongst us. Of course, one of the most telling emotional-creative dynamics of electro-acoustic innovators such as Weather Report, was the seamless interplay of multi-keyboardist Zawinul and saxophonist Wayne Shorter, and on the extended changes and transformations of "Time," the flowing lyricism of Seamus Blake's tenor ties the entire arrangement together, while fulfilling the melodic focus of a vocalist, without fencing in the band's creative thrust. And for

this listener, Moreno's tasteful use of echo in the (more or less) swing section of "Time" points to the creative directions jazz guitarists might readily pursue, employing a provocative textural pallet that is both modern and probing while maintaining the liquid-cherry center of an acoustic-electric instrument.

"Overall, the thing I am happiest about in our work on this recording is that *Jazz Side of the Moon* has some kind of analogous arc that makes sense to listeners who are familiar with the original work. Collectively, the guys just played their asses off, and it's kind of a testament to these times where you can hire guys with one short rehearsal, and tell them, 'Oh, by the way, this tune is in 5/8,' and they're like, 'Hey, no problem.' I mean Mike and Ari and Seamus are so accomplished, and so flexible. I don't think you could do that, talking about the early '90s, where people were so steeped inside the tradition, that you could talk to them about coming in and playing on a Gershwin tune, but to then suggest that we now play on a pop tune in a manner analogous to how you played on the Gershwin tune, yet maintaining some jazz integrity...that's a pretty big step. But it's a different generation, and for someone like Mike, who is younger than me, to be coming out of music school with the range of music he's expected to know is really daunting—so the bar has been raised more and more."

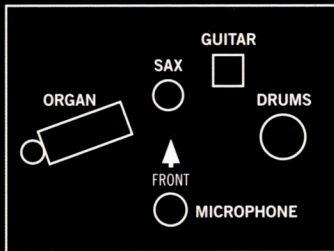
And for this listener, who came of age in

the era of the Beatles, Jimi Hendrix and so-called electric Miles, in returning anew to the original record it's fascinating to re-discover how provocative Pink Floyd's classic remains, and to hear how well this quartet's collective interplay served that music. And how beautifully co-producer Sam Yahel's organ—while not the dominant voice, surely a prominent presence—sets the aesthetic tone for these proceedings: nothing rushed or forced or extravagant...elegant and swinging and exploratory, never stepping on anyone's toes—deceptively laid back and responsive, always listening intently, with plenty of rhythmic vitality...a sensibility he shares with collaborators Moreno, Hoenig and Blake, which goes a long ways towards explaining why their take on Pink Floyd's music is so engaging and stands up so well to repeated listenings.

Or to reference a tongue-in-cheek aside from tenor saxophonist Seamus Blake's solo on Pink Floyd's biggest hit..."We're in the money..."

By Chip Stern
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Drummer-guitarist Chip Stern is an ASCAP Deem Taylor Award-winning music journalist who has written extensively about jazz, progressive music, high end audio and musical instruments since 1977.



OUR EQUIPMENT LIST

MICROPHONE: Soundfield Mark 5 (modified)

MICROPHONE PREAMPS: George Kaye designed and built vacuum tube preamps, Tube Tech

MICROPHONE CABLES: custom made Crystal Cable

MIXER: George Kaye custom vacuum tube mixer

POWER CABLES AND FILTERS: Jack Bybee

ANALOG-TO-DIGITAL CONVERTERS: custom Mytek Digital

AC POWERLINE CONDITIONING: proprietary designs and Equitech

HIGH-RESOLUTION DIGITAL RECORDERS: Genex Optical and Tascam DVD

MONITOR SPEAKERS: PMC LB1*

* Keep in mind that when we record we cannot use large audiophile speakers. Most of our recording gear is in very small rooms in a church or concert hall, so we usually wind up sitting about three feet away from the speakers. The PMC speakers were designed for "nearfield" listening of this sort.

If we were to sit this close to a normal audiophile speaker the high frequencies would be overwhelming.



Produced by David Chesky, Sam Yahel & Nicholas Prout
Executive Producer: Norman Chesky

Recorded, Edited and Mastered by Nicholas Prout
Second Engineer & Session Coordinator: Rick Eckerle
Session Assistants: Edward Lee Priest, Matt DeSteno, Adam Minkoff

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at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, New York City

Production Assistants:
Lisa Hershfield, Felicia Douglass, Adam Minkoff

Art Direction: Andrij Borys

Special Credits:
Ari Hoenig appears courtesy of Dreyfus Records.
Ari Hoenig plays Yamaha Drums & Zildjian Cymbals.