

PETE MCCANN, WITHOUT QUESTION REVIEW

by Steph Cosme on August 8, 2023

JAZZ +1 + + +

CONTENTS Full Article Overview Rating Comments

FULL REVIEW

Pete McCann, Without Question Review



In the dazzling hues of modern jazz, few artists manage to craft a sonic adventure quite as resonant and inventive as Pete McCann in his latest album, *Without Question*. Released on August 4, 2023, this album isn't just a showcase of McCann's guitar virtuosity; it's a profound statement, an auditory adventure for the ears, and a heartfelt tribute to the greats.

The album *Without Question* is a stage where extraordinary talents unite, each playing a distinct role in crafting a musical masterpiece. McCann's electric and acoustic guitar skills sets the tone, interwoven with the lilting phrases of Steve Wilson's alto and soprano saxophone. Henry Hey, not only contributing his finesse on piano and Rhodes but also as the mastermind behind the mix, adds layers of complexity and texture. Matt Pavolka's versatile touch on both acoustic and electric bass melds the rhythm, while Mark Ferber's dynamic drums complete this harmonious assembly. McCann praises their contribution: "Their unique talents motivate me to compose music that brings out the best in them." Together, they breathe life into McCann's vision, creating a vibrant listening experience that's as multifaceted as it is unified.

Opening with the title track, "Without Question," we are greeted with an up-tempo composition that immediately establishes the album's ambition. The fluidity of McCann's solo, backed by the intricate interplay of Hey's piano and propelled by Pavolka's Ferber's forward-moving rhythm unit, resonates both lyrically and exploratorily. McCann's solo ideas seamlessly combine modern jazz with the essence of jazz heritage. Every melody and harmony is distinct, yet they blend into a perfect auditory landscape that evolves and builds around your listening experience. That's how this track feels — a constantly unfolding musical journey where each moment introduces a fresh stimulus, yet all are part of a unified, breathtaking whole.

The tribute to the late John Abercrombie in "I Can Remember" is constructed around a beautiful melody; it's a warm embrace of tension and release. McCann's understanding of Abercrombie's rich chordal textures and unique harmonic relations are not just evident but poignant. It's McCann masterfully painting with tones, where each pick attack is applied with respect and love, and where every harmonic color and shade must be savored, allowing the entire composition to be fully appreciated in all its layered complexity.

"Trifecta," as its name suggests, is a delightful blend of rhythmic ideas with harmonies that span three key centers. Here's where the album takes an audacious turn, offering a complex and inviting musical exploration. McCann's single notes and chords serve as architectural building blocks, creating a bridge that spans three distinct musical landscapes. Each section offers a unique perspective that challenges conventional design, yet the final structure stands united, majestic, and awe-inspiring. This track escorts the listener across surprising terrains, making the journey not just a musical experience, but a thrilling adventure that resonates within the very soul of jazz's creativity itself.

"Lost City" serves as McCann's reflective and powerful echo of the uncertain times during the Covid lockdown. The choice of an acoustic guitar lends authenticity and rawness that perfectly embodies the mood. Its light folk jazz overtone, intricate and profound, doesn't merely paint the urban landscapes but crafts them in sound, forming resonating images that linger in the soul. McCann's solo, a delicate dance of activity and pause, showcases his adept skill at musical storytelling, leaving listeners with a feeling of having wandered through an eerily beautiful world, now forever etched in memory.

The tribute to Lee Konitz in "Lovely Thing" is a harmonious dialogue between the epochs of jazz, an exciting conversation where history meets innovation. The contrafact on "What Is This Thing Called Love" isn't merely played; it's sculpted with the artisan's care, the ensemble welding bebop's classic form with the fresh zeal of modern jazz. It's a dance indeed, but not just any dance — it's a waltz across time, where generations twirl and whirl together, smiling in recognition. McCann and his ensemble capture Konitz's enduring legacy with such joyful exuberance that listeners can almost see the musicians caught up in that glorious creative moment. Konitz's sound fuses with today's melodic colors and thrilling rhythms, and the dance floor is never quite the same again.

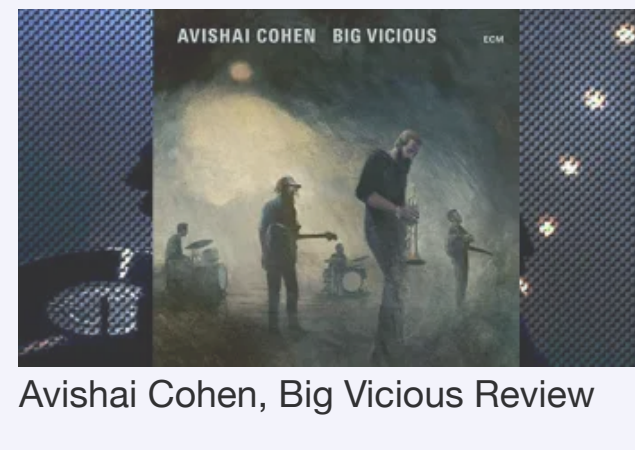
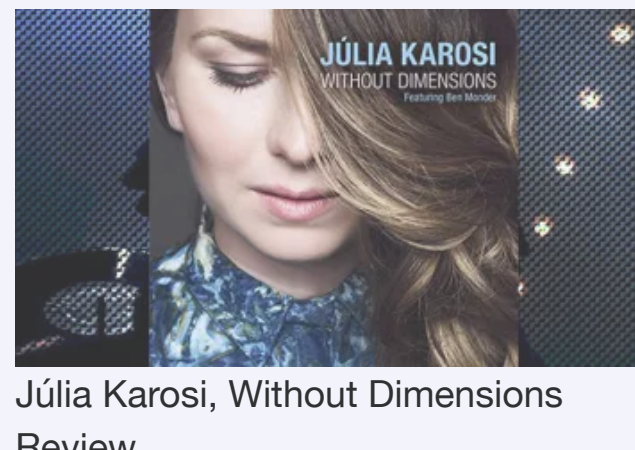
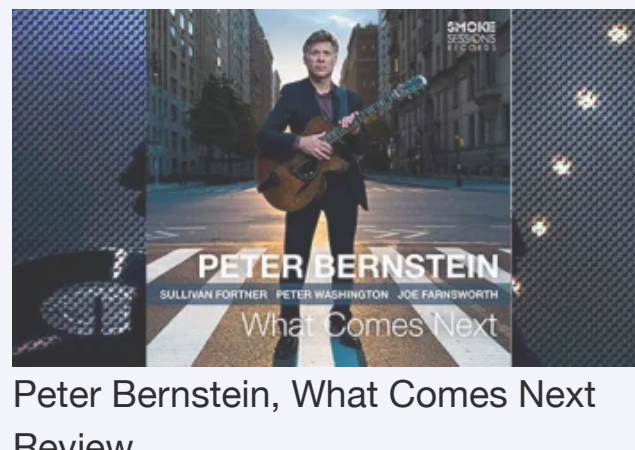
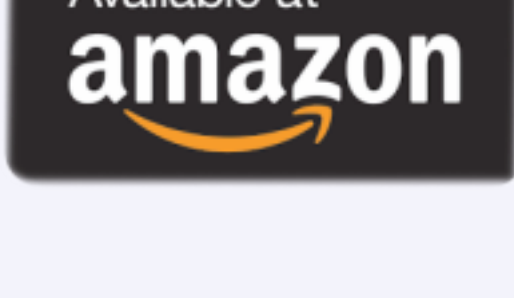
"Blues for O.M.," inspired by Olivier Messiaen, is a fusion of tradition and innovation. Employing the fourth mode of limited transposition within a jazz blues context, McCann crafts a musical space that's as rich in texture as it is pioneering in approach. This pairing of classical compositional techniques with the jazz blues form and vernacular is a veritable testament to McCann's genius, where the boundaries of jazz are both respected and provocatively pushed. The result is a harmonious blend that resonates deeply with the listener, echoing both the blues' soulful legacy and the creative freedom that drives the genre forward. It's like watching a master painter at work, each stroke deliberate yet daring, painting not just a scene but a story that unfolds with every listen.

McCann's *Without Question* is an outstanding exploration in the evolution of modern jazz guitar. Every note is a brushstroke, each chord a vibrant hue, reflecting today's harmonic and melodic colors. McCann's playing is a celebration, a complex interplay that resonates with the mood and energy of each composition. His ear for guitar tones, and his ability to shape sound, is the unseen artist's hand, painting emotions and stories that captivate the listener. This album is an indication of McCann's significant contribution to the modern jazz guitar scene, a unique blend of creativity and technical mastery that offers a fresh perspective while honoring the genre's rich legacy.

Whether you're immersed in Pete McCann's earlier works or discovering his artistry for the first time, *Without Question* is a vibrant invitation to engage, challenge, and inspire. It transcends mere listening; it's an exploration, a journey to feel, absorb, and cherish. In this captivating landscape of modern jazz, McCann's album proves that the door is always ajar for creativity, exploration, and, yes, a sprinkle of magic that dances on the edge of the known and the excitingly new. That's the short of it!



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OVERVIEW

ITEM REVIEWED	Without Question
AUTHOR	Steph Cosme
RELEASE DATE	August 4, 2023
LABEL	Self-Released
STACCATO.FY RATING	9.2

REVIEW RATING

OUR RATING
YOU RATE THE MUSIC

ALBUM RATING

9.2 ————— 10

BOTTOM LINE

9.2

TOTAL SCORE

10

USER SCORE

What's your reaction?

NEW FAV!

100%

LOVE IT!

0%

ITS COOL

0%

ITS OK

0%

MEH...

0%

ITS DEAD

0%

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