



SHIJIN

October 24, 2018

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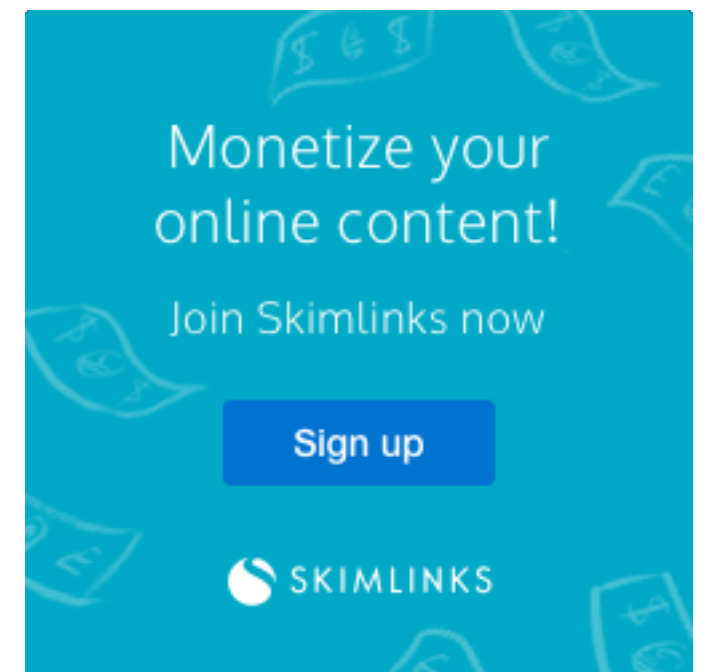
SHIJIN

Self-titled

Alter-Nativ/SOCADISC/AN100

You're likely already thinking "what kind of name is that?" and "what's with the weird record label name?" Yes, this is not your usual jazz group but instead a co-op group that brings American and European jazz artists together in a fusion-jazz/improvisational jazz format across eight original compositions that range from three to seven and half minutes. The quartet has musicians that have performed in a variety of idioms but all favor creative jazz.

They are saxophonist Jacques Schwarz-Bart, keyboardist Malcolm Braff, bassist Laurent David, and drummer Stephane Galland. (more on each later). The opening "Smells Funny" could just as easily be titled "Smells Funky" with its heavy bass line and heated grooves laid down by the tenor sax and rhythm section as Braff injects his Rhodes and David offers a fuzzed out bass solo. Arguably, though, "Anemoi" is even



FEATURED

Sean Chambers
 Welcome To My Blues
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funkier – a brief ditty with first soprano sax, then tenor and back to soprano over an electronic ensemble again.

“Afro Bear” begins with Galland’s drum pattern before settling into another infectious theme and ensemble sound to carry it through as Braff chords and vamps on an acoustic piano before turning to electronics mid piece. This tune may remind some of those early 70’s fusion albums by Joe Farrell. “New Neighborhood” has a folk-like melody played by Schwarz-Bart at various tempo, propelled by the rhythm section as Braff riffs on both acoustic piano and Rhodes. It quiets down for “The Bait” with the tenor eventually taking the lead. “Blitzt’s Z’Zuri?” gets more complex, both with Schwarz-Bart raging tenor and Braff going nuts on the keyboards. “Discomania” is not disco as we know it but 70s type fusion with Braff’s keyboards leading the way. The original “Edgewater Hotel” closes in joyful fashion with Galland delivering some intricate rhythms. These tracks borrow much from 70s fusion but somehow reflect a more contemporary feel.

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Okay, back to the musicians, each of which has an impressive solo career. Jacques Schwarz-Bart was born in Guadeloupe in the Caribbean. He began playing saxophone at age 2 and found himself at Berklee three years later. From there, he’s worked with Roy Hargrove’s RH Factor, Danilo Perez, Ari Hoenig, Meshell Ndegeocello, D’Angelo and Chucho Valdes. He’s also been a leader in the Gwoka Jazz Project, blended modern jazz with ritual voodoo music in the Jazz Racine Haiti project, and collaborate with pianist Omar Sosa in The Creole Spirits.

Stephane Galland, from Belgium, took up drums at age three and after several years in classical music, began playing jazz at age 11. With his group AKA MOON he has performed worldwide and recorded over 20 CDs. He’s worked with artists from Africa India, Asia, Turkey, Europe and America and with these luminaries: Joe Zawinul, Joe Lovano, Toots Thielemans, Philip Catherine, Mark Turner and Robin Eubanks.

Pianist and keyboardist Malcolm Braff was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, grew up in Dakar and Switzerland and began playing piano at age six. He’s had 20 recordings of his own, has played globally and been a band leader. Bassist Laurent David from Paris also began in classical music but with guitar. He switched to electric bass when taking up jazz, has played with several adventurous improvisers and now resides in New York where he is the creator and artistic director for this label, the non-profit Alter-Nativ.

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Given the multi-cultural exposure and experience of these musicians, it’s no accident that they bond so well here.

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