

REVIEW BY CARSTEN TIMPE (LAUTEN-INFO, GERMANY)

Renaissance sounds in a jazz trio setting: a new CD new release 'Yes Love', features the Isbin Trio (Tern Records 2019). This is jazz music played on a Renaissance lute together with bass and drums in a unique combination of an 'old' instrument with a jazz rhythm section.

The Belgian composer, jazz musician, guitarist and lutenist Gilbert Isbin, is one of the most prolific composers of new lute music at the moment (see reviews in several luteninfo) and 'Yes Love' proves that this unusual mix can nevertheless work wonderfully.

Most of the twelve pieces were composed by Isbin alone (except 'Blue in Green' by Bill Evans / Miles Davis, 'Singsong' by Jan Garbarek and 'Wawacou' by Cameron Brown and Gilbert Isbin). Listening to the CD evokes pleasant associations with the masterly recordings of great jazz musicians such as Charlie Haden and Pat Metheny (album 'Beyond the Missouri Sky') and the Belgian guitarist Philip Catherine (album 'End of August'). This new CD, 'Yes Love' creates a very relaxed, clearly structured and melodious soundscape spread out before the ear of the listener, which sets a wonderful counterpoint especially to the hectic pre-Christmas season.

Perhaps it is a secret and at the same time a symbol that this group of Belgian jazz musicians, in a centrally located, densely populated country with three national languages, in the field of conflict between the interests of the most diverse population groups, in spite of all divisiveness, are able to merge musical elements and currents in a relaxed and harmonious way. So that seemingly great contrasts can be bridged playfully. In any case, this CD seems to me to be a wonderful example of this kind of bridge-building.

Isbin (together with the bassist Xavier Rau and the percussionist Peter Vangheluwe) opens the CD with the quiet piece 'Yes Love', which may, with a little melancholy, perhaps suggest the end of a beautiful summer. It continues with 'Gift to the fall', a lively piece with subtly percussive accompaniment by Peter Vangheluwe. 'Observation' is calm again with an interesting melodic lead and features a small bass solo by Xavier Rau. 'A fine day' is a faster piece with the lute confidently improvising on the catchy theme, accompanied by a pulsating bass.

The Bill Evans / Miles Davis classic 'Blue in Green', follows and demonstrates the close musical relationship with the Charlie Haden / Pat Metheny album 'Beyond the Missouri Sky'. In the piece 'Sky and Sand'; the lute moves with great confidence through this light-hearted piece. Here, as in many other places, Isbin is supported by the soulful bass of Xavier Rau. 'Aquest Amor' begins with a few bars reminiscent of the music of Ralph Towner ('Beneath an Evening Sky'), and the melodious lute playing resonates with Mediterranean guitar music.

'Singsong' by Jan Garbarek captivates with its crystal clear lute playing, framed by the accompanying bass. 'Wawacou' is reminiscent of the bossa nova stars of the 1960s (Gilberto, Jobim etc.) and there is considerable Brazilian flair in the piece. 'Troubled', also a very melodious piece on this CD, does not sound at all 'troubled' - the lute has a small solo, accompanied by bass and percussion. In general the percussive elements of Peter Vangheluwe are used very tastefully and discreetly in the interplay with bass and lute. 'Wellspring', a quick piece, starting with a rather simple melody, continues with the theme and improvisation; a piece of relaxation without effort. The last piece 'Peace Piece', a musical message in troubled times perhaps, completes this successful CD. An almost march-like melody is interrupted by a loosened, rapid middle section, in which the lute again proves its ability as a completely 'jazz-compatible' plucked instrument. Overall, the new CD 'Yes Love' with the Isbin Trio is a highly recommended new release.