



Edward Simon
Unicity
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“Mr. Simon’s touch, light and warm, allows for his music to drift calmly, taking its where it has to go.”

The New York Times

“Simon is an important presence on the jazz and world music scene.”

Los Angeles Times

It’s often said and written that jazz is based on improvisation. This is a half-truth. While improvisation is indeed a vital component of the music, it is improvisation in the group context – *democratic improvisation* – that truly defines the art form. And in the history of the idiom, the trio: piano, bass, and drum, is the music’s most dominant format where that type of group improvisational interaction receives its purest and most powerful expression. In jazz there have been many spectacular trios: Oscar Peterson with Ray Brown and Ed Thigpen, Ahmad Jamal with Israel Crosby and Vernel Fournier, and of course Bill Evans with Scot LaFaro and Paul Motian. Now pianist/composer **Edward Simon**, an artist with an encyclopedic artistic range that encompasses jazz, Latin and classical forms, is poised to join that legendary list of terrific triads with his **CAM JAZZ** debut, **Unicity**, his eighth CD as a leader, with bassist **John Patitucci** and drummer **Brian Blade**, 2/4ths of the **Wayne Shorter Quartet**. Simon played on Patitucci’s 2001 Concord CD, **Communion**, and also recorded with the bassist and Blade on Patitucci’s 2003 follow-up, **Songs, Stories and Spirituals**.

As Simon tells Ted Panken in the CD’s liner notes, “... [s]omething happened on that date that stuck with me forever ... [o]ur chemistry was extraordinary, and I promised myself that at some point I would a make a record with this trio.” **Unicity** is that promise fulfilled.

Simon penned the majority of the ten tracks, and his compositions are written in such a way where the improvisers engage in a continuous molding and shaping of the melody, rhythm and harmony, while maintaining the pensive and propulsive rhythmic gravity we call swing. “Abiding Unicity” and its reprise are florid and pulsing shout-outs to the brilliant Brazilian multi-instrumentalist Egberto Gismonti. “Pathless Path” features a hypnotic piano ostinato that bedrocks the shifting bass and drum accompaniment. On the contrapuntal “Evolution,” Patitucci’s electric bass takes the lead, while “The Midst of Chaos,” showcases Simon’s light-speed lyricism which matches the velocity of Herbie Hancock’s classic, “Eye of the Hurricane.”

“Eastern” is an evocative Afro-Eurasian tinged number, contrasted by the pop-friendly vibe of “Gerviasolas.”

Rounding out the tracks are Patitucci’s medium tempoed selection “The Messenger,” and Simon’s breathtaking rendition of the Catalonian composer Frederic Mompou’s “Prelude #9,” which Simon was inspired to play after he recorded Mompou’s “Songs and Dances” on **Neruda**, vocalist Luciana Souza’s 2004 **Sunnyside** tribute to the legendary Chilean poet. “I have felt a very strong connection with Mompou’s music from the moment I heard it,” Simon noted. “On this prelude the harmony is very jazzy – a lot of altered and minor 6/9 chords. It’s written in 6/8, and I changed the time-signature to 4/4 and created a solo section based on the composition for me to blow on. It’s so beautiful. Mompou knows how to say so much with few words, few notes. To me, he exemplifies the meaning of the expression ‘less is more.’”

Simon started playing the electric organ and some percussion instruments at the age of eight in the coastal town of Cardon, Venezuela where he was born in 1969. His father, Hadsy, encouraged Simon and his brothers, percussionist Marlon and trumpeter Michael, in their musical pursuits. Simon gravitated to jazz from Latin music after viewing a video featuring Chick Corea and Stan Getz performing at the White House. Simon enrolled at Philadelphia’s University of the Arts at the age of 17 to study classical music under the guidance of Susan Starr, and jazz at the Manhattan School of Music.

In Philly, Simon came under the spell of Bill Evans, Herbie Hancock, Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, and Miles Davis. Simon’s professional jazz career started in 1988 in bassist Charles Fambrough’s trio. He also worked with Greg Osby, Kevin Eubanks, Jerry Gonzalez, Herbie Mann, and Paquito D’Rivera. He was a long-standing member of saxophonist Bobby Watson’s Horizon (1989-1994) and trumpeter Terence Blanchard’s group (1995-2001). He was also a finalist in the 1994 **Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Competition**. His recorded work as a sideman includes Greg Osby, **Mind Games** (1988), Charlie Sepulveda, **Algo Nuestro** (1993), Marlon Simon & Nagual Spirits, **Live in La Paz, Bolivia** (2003), Michael Simon & Roots United **Relevacion** (2004), and Javier Girotto’s **New York Sessions** on the **CAM Jazz** label (2004).

Simon’s critically-acclaimed CD’s as a leader have been released on the Audioquest, Kokopelli, Mythology, Red Records and Criss Cross labels. They include: **Beauty Within** (1993), **Edward Simon** (1995), **La Bikina** (1998), **Afinidad** (2001), **The Process** (2003) **Fiestas De Agosto** (2005) and **Simplicitas** (2005). In all of his recordings, Simon brilliantly incorporates Afro-Hispanic rhythms, instruments and genres with classical and jazz forms. In addition to his sterling work as a leader, he also composed **The Venezuelan Suite**, a four-movement, **Chamber Music America** commissioned opus that highlights his country’s *merengue, joropo, gaita* and *vals* folk idioms. He was also the recipient of **2005 Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Fellowship**.

With **Unicity**, Edward Simon is at the zenith of his compositional and improvisational game, buoyed by some incredible musicians. “Simon attains the apotheosis of his march to concision, working hand-in-glove with this sublime bass-and-drum tandem,” Ted Panken writes. “Each is simultaneously a sound painter and a groove master. Extraordinary chemistry.”

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