

Liner notes John Abercrombie:

Solo Guitar is one of the most, if not the most challenging of tasks. Nowhere to hide is a phrase that comes to mind immediately. No bassist, drummer, piano player or horn player to blend with or play off of. Solo, means solo! All alone! Just man and instrument. (Oh, I forgot the Microphone). To do this is indeed difficult, but to do it on an old 1939 Gibson archtop guitar, recorded only with a mike and no extra goodies like reverb/delay, etc., is really taking a big risk.

Another phrase that comes to mind, is: "Bare Bones". Nothing but the basic essentials. It also takes a great Leap of Faith. To me, that means more than confidence, or a sense of assurance, but an actual state of mind, that allows this to happen. I think, that I'm making myself clear, about how I feel about this! Joep Van Leeuwen (my friend and colleague for many years now) makes this Leap of Faith, in the most Musical way! Like his influences (Joe Pass and Jim Hall), he doesn't merely fill all the spaces, but rather approaches playing solo, as if there might be a rhythm section somewhere inside, and responds accordingly.

Not feeling compelled to fill all gaps, he's able to dialogue with himself, change or substitute harmonies or even just play the melody, without any chordal embellishments as in the lovely version of Sometime Ago. In this case, just the single note melody is enough (less is more) to state his case. This way draws the listener and the player into the music. You must listen more carefully, and in doing so, something beautiful is revealed. Without going through a description of each tune, I'll just mention a few of the pieces that seemed to resonate with me. Probably because they're tunes that I also play and know well.

It Could Happen to You, is stated in a rubato style, before establishing the tempo. This is such a nice relaxed way of introducing a song. It allows the listener, as well as the player, time to let the tune unfold and get the melody, and harmony in your ear. It also lets the player experiment with subtle reharmonizations and embellishments, that wouldn't work in a group setting. This approach is taken by Joep on several of the songs on this disc and helps to give a focus, or dare I say: Concept! to the overall flow. This same approach works beautifully on Nardis which includes



some lovely Bill Evanisms (is that a real word?). It would be difficult to hear this song, without a tip of the hat to the the man who made it happen! Polkadots and Moonbeams, contains some great moving inner lines that gives it a more orchestral feel. Line for Lyons (a tune I've heard many times before, but have never played), is given a more straight reading, in tempo that is as it should be. I think the key word here (or one of them anyway), is intimacy. The player is having an intimate moment with his a guitar, and the tune at hand and the listener has the opportunity to share in this moment.

It has been a great pleasure to listen to this recording, and has given me inspiration at the same time. Perhaps one day, I'll take this Leap of Faith, and try a solo recording myself. I'd like to thank Joep for this music, and I'm sure it will draw you in, like it did me.

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