

Christian Jacob
Beautiful Jazz
A private concert
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From WilderJazz (1401-1401LP)

Grammy nominated pianist and arranger Christian Jacob presents his first solo piano recording, *Beautiful Jazz: a private concert*, aptly titled as this intimate solo recording is a dedication to the music that drew him away from the classical world and introduced him to the beautiful world of jazz. The release will be available on CD as well as a limited edition vinyl LP in true analog.

Recorded in Los Angeles at the Zipper Concert Hall on a Hamburg Steinway Model D Grand, *Beautiful Jazz* captures the power and beauty of a true private concert. "There's just something about the atmosphere of performing in a concert hall that makes everything easier to play and more fulfilling," Christian explains. "It's the real deal, and I wanted my solo recording to capture that."

Christian Jacob first gained widespread exposure as co-leader, arranger and pianist with the Tierney Sutton Band. While recording eight critically acclaimed CDs with the band, Christian has also built a substantial career as a solo artist and leader of the Christian Jacob Trio. He has arranged and conducted around the world, performing with big bands, symphonies, and the King of Thailand. As Chuck Berg from *Jazz Times Magazine* describes him, Christian is "a post-bop modernist touched by the souls of Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett."

Critics such as Stephen Holden from the *New York Times* have described Christian's performances as "phenomenal" and "masterful." *Keyboard Magazine* raves: "Christian sounds like Bill Evans meets Keith Jarrett meets Maurice Ravel. If you're a fan of mainstream jazz, you'll want to get him on your iPod soon." From *Jazz Hot*: "There is a lightness and fluidity in Christian Jacob that seduces you."

Born in Lorraine, France, Christian began classical music studies at the age of four. He went on to study with Pierre Sancan at the Paris Conservatory and graduated with the prestigious First Prize. He then began to prepare for international piano competitions such as the Van Cliburn Competition.

It seemed as if Christian's destiny as a classical pianist had been set in motion from a very young age. However, when he was nine, Christian heard 'Take Five' by the Dave Brubeck Quartet on the radio, and it changed his life. He had to learn more about this incredible world of jazz. Christian recalls what soon followed: "I went to the local music store to get more of that 'Brubeck stuff.' I remember the guy at the store saying, 'Well, if you like Brubeck, then you're gonna love this.' And he played me Oscar Peterson. Of course, I was blown away and bought some of his recordings. I had a hard time grasping how Oscar Peterson was able to do what he did. It was even harder to understand how he was improvising at such a level. I wanted to learn how to do it."

Christian began studying improvisation on his own, and when he graduated from the Paris Conservatory, he took the risk of coming to America and studying jazz at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. "Everyone assumed I was going the classical route, even me, but when the time came, I just couldn't do it," Christian reflects, "I had heard improvisation, and it was like a door

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had opened to infinite possibilities. I was in love with jazz music and afraid that if I didn't try it then, I would miss my chance."

While at Berklee, Christian won several awards, including the Oscar Peterson Jazz Masters Award, the Great American Jazz Piano Competition, and "Downbeat" magazine's distinction as Top Collegiate Jazz Soloist. Christian went on to teach at Berklee after graduation, but when Maynard Ferguson needed a pianist for his Big Bop Nouveau, Christian joined the band. Maynard soon went on to choose Christian as the first featured artist in the *Maynard Ferguson Presents* series on Concord Records. He produced Christian's first two trio recordings: *Maynard Ferguson Presents Christian Jacob* and *Time Lines*.

From there, Christian began performing and recording with many of today's jazz legends: Flora Purim and Airto Moreira, Randy Brecker, Miroslav Vitous, Benny Golson and Bill Holman to name just a few. His newest collaboration has been as musical director for Broadway legend Betty Buckley. Branching out into the musical theatre genre has proven to be a natural fit for Christian, as it allows him to draw seamlessly from his classical background. "My love of arranging drives my playing with Betty," Christian says. "She wants to be fresh and not do things the way they have previously been done. She's a great musician and she wants the excitement of new material. So we welcome each other's creative approach and sensibilities. And we always have fun playing together."

Having contributed to more than fifty recordings Christian decided that it was finally time to focus on a project he'd been planning to do for years, a solo piano recording.

"I thought it would be interesting to work on some of the music that initially drew me to jazz. 'Tea for Two' because it was the first song I learned to improvise on: 'My Romance,' 'I'm Old Fashioned' and 'One Note Samba' because they take me back to when I was first studying jazz at the Berklee College of Music. Then, there are a few iconic ballads like 'Body and Soul,' and 'How Long Has This Been Going On.' I didn't plan to record 'Giant Steps,' but I'm happy I did. It's that weird and beautiful tune that everyone tries to wrap their brain around. I also wanted to share an Etude by Stravinsky. Although I wanted to become a jazz musician, I always loved classical music, that's why I had to include this little gem by Stravinsky." ~ Christian

Although Christian had always envisioned his first solo release to be on CD only, the creative momentum of the project inspired him to make a change of plans. As Christian recalls, "An extra surprise with this recording is that I got to release a vinyl LP. And out of respect for all the analog purists out there, we kept it 100% analog. It all started when I saw the painting for the CD cover and just knew it was meant to go on an LP jacket. We had no idea what we were getting ourselves into (laughs) but we're really excited and proud of how both the CD and vinyl turned out."

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