

Swiss Jazz Orchestra - Live At Jazz Festival Bern (2014)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Welcome at Marians Jazzroom* 02. *A Felicidade* 03. *Preludio No. 3* 04. *Cidade Nova*
05. *Song for Hamp* 06. *Libertango* 07. *Connections* 08. *Samba for Jimmy* 09. *Bandoneon*
10. *Andalucia* Dave Blaser: trumpet; Johannes "J.W." Walter: trumpet; Lukas Thoni: trumpet; Thomas Knuchel: trumpet; Adrian Pflugshaupt, Reto Suhner, Till Grunewald, Jurg Bucher, Marc Schodler: reeds; Vincent Lachat: trombone; Stefan Schlegel: trombone; Andreas Tschopp: trombone; Reto Zumstein: trombone; Lucas Wirz: trombone; Philip Henzi: piano; Nicolas Perrin: guitar; Antonio Schiavano: bass; Tobias Friedli: drums; Roland Wager: percussion. Special Guest Artists — Paquito D'Rivera: alto sax, clarinet; Claudio Roditi: trumpet, flugelhorn; Michael Zisman: bandoneon.

Some big-band albums are heated and brassy, others cool and understated, while a precious few simply cast a mesmerizing spell. "Live at Jazzfestival Bern," recorded in May 2013 by the unerring Swiss Jazz Orchestra, drops anchor squarely in the last of those realms, thanks in part to the ensemble's perceptive choice of material and even more so to the conclusive brilliance of guest artists Paquito D'Rivera, Claudio Roditi and Michael Zisman.

Needless to say, any solo by trumpeter Roditi or alto saxophonist D'Rivera is worth hearing and savoring more than once, and they are showcased throughout this superlative album. As for Zisman, he is not a bandoneon player who is partial to jazz but a jazz musician who happens to play the bandoneon. In other words, the cat can swing, as he does on half a dozen tracks including Bert Joris' radiant "Connections," on which he is the lone soloist. D'Rivera composed another theme, the well-knit "Bandoneon," especially for Zisman's accordion-like instrument, and solos therein with Zisman and pianist Philip Henzi. Good as that tune is, D'Rivera's buoyant "Samba for Jimmy" (incendiary solos courtesy of Paquito and Roditi) is even better. Roditi has also mapped out a pair of winners, "Cidade Nova" and "Song for Hamp," which dwell in fast company alongside Antonio Carlos Jobim's lyrical "A Felicidade," Roberto Panzera's debonair "Preludio No. 3," Astor Piazzolla's sensuous "Libertango" and Ernesto Lecuona's graceful "Andalucia" (a.k.a. "The Breeze and I"), which ends the concert on an exhilarating note.

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As touched on earlier, the SJO is an impressive ensemble in every respect, blowing with abandon or self-control as needed while making its guests feel at ease and indispensable (as they surely are). Besides Henzi, the orchestra's soloists here are flutist Reto Suhner ("Cidade Nova"), guitarist Nick Perrin ("Song for Hamp"), drummer Tobias Friedli ("Libertango"), trombonist Andreas Tschopp and percussionist Roland Wager ("Andalucia"). This was a jazz concert worthy of the name, one that clearly merits a wider audience than was present that evening in Bern. Listen and applaud. ---Jack Bowers, allaboutjazz.com

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