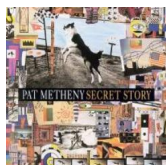


Pat Metheny – Secret Story (1992)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 19 October 2009 20:04 - Last Updated Monday, 09 March 2015 16:31

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01. *Above the Treetops* 02. *Facing West* 03. *Cathedral in a Suitcase* 04. *Finding and Believing* 05. *Longest Summer, The* 06. *Sunlight* 07. *Rain River* 08. *Always and Forever* 09. *See the World* 10. *As a Flower Blossoms* 11. *Antonia* 12. *Truth Will Always Be, The* 13. *Tell Her You Saw Me* 14. *Not to Be Forgotten (Our Final Hour)*

Pat Metheny - Bass (Electric), Composer, Electronic Percussion, Guitars, Guitar (Acoustic), Keyboard Bass, Keyboards, Percussion, Piano, Piano (Electric), Sitar (Electric), Synthesizer Dave Barger - Trombone, Tuba John Clark - French Horn, Steve Ferrone - Drums Andy Findon - Flute Gil Goldstein - Accordion, Conductor, Piano Danny Gottlieb - Cymbals Charlie Haden - Bass Anthony Jackson - Guitar Skaila Kanga - Harp Ryan Kisor - Flugelhorn, Trumpet Mark Ledford - Vocals Will Lee - Bass (Electric) Jeremy Lubbock - Arranger, Conductor Tom "Bones" Malone - Trombone Armando Marçal - Percussion Lyle Mays - Piano Sammy Merendino - Drums Mike Metheny - Flugelhorn, Trumpet Michael Philip Mossman - Flugelhorn, Trumpet Pinpeat Orchestra - Vocals Steve Rodby - Bass David Taylor - Trombone (Bass) Toots Thielemans - Harmonica Naná Vasconcelos - Percussion, Vocals Paul Wertico - Drums Gavyn Wright - Concert Master, Leader Akiko Yano - Vocals

Secret Story is among the more provocative recordings in Pat Metheny's oeuvre. Combining the relaxed groove of the early Pat Metheny Group recordings, it is full of odd sounds, exotic instrumentation, and the participation of members of the London Orchestra conducted by Jeremy Lubbock. Along with regular group members -- bassist Steve Rodby, drummer Paul Wertico, percussionist Naná Vasconcelos, pianist-keyboardist Lyle Mays -- numerous guests adorn these tracks as well: bassists Charlie Haden and Will Lee, percussionist Armando Marçal, vocalist Mark Ledford, jazz harmonica legend Toots Thielmans, Gil Goldstein, and Pat's brother Mike Metheny. But what's most notable is that none of these players are constants, as this is most certainly a Metheny solo effort: Secret Story is his own song, so to speak. His acoustic and electric guitars are augmented by synthesizers and samplers, and no matter how lush these proceedings get, they are never overwhelmed by production. Metheny is one of the few jazz musicians working today who completely understands what technology is used for, and his production never overwhelms his compositions. The entire disc comes off as a sort of interior travelogue, a heart's remembrance, a memento mori; it is one of the most emotionally

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expressive recordings in his career. "Above the Treetops," the album's opener, which features Haden and the two percussionists, is so utterly exotic and poetic it feels like the opening number in a soundtrack (and perhaps that's what it is); it's based on a Cambodian hymn titled "Buong Buong." The sound of a children's choir singing the hymn is sampled into the synth lines that delicately open the track. Percussion slips in and out sparingly, Haden's bass offers a heavily reverbed backbone for the structure of the tune, and Metheny's acoustic guitar and synthesizers cover the rest. It is a reflective and meditative moment that contains a kind of dignified majesty that builds up to his beautiful nylon string solo, the bluesy and grooving "Cathedral in a Suitcase."

"Cathedral in a Suitcase" showcases a slight return to Metheny's employ by Danny Gottlieb with a series of beautiful cymbal rolls, and drummer Steve Ferone and Marcal on percussion. But it's Metheny with all of his keyboards and the orchestra that truly hold the day, providing a lush, cascading sequence of changes that offer the entire notion of majesty and travel. There is a sense of wonder and awe with all the euphoric drama that is so inherent in his compositions. One is taken from reflection to moving through a doorway and out into the world, watching it as it passes by through a windshield before the individual dissolves into its identity, only to emerge once more to be transformed. The pulse of the keyboards is enhanced by the utter grandeur of the strings. The ten-minute "Finding and Believing" is almost a tone poem that begins with a funky Latin rhythm. The funky sound of synths, electric sitar, and other strings is balanced by that popping bassline played by Lee. This is a suite, full of texture, dimension, and drama that becomes something wholly other from beginning to end as the orchestra adds expressionistic and elegant dissonance to the rhythm driven proceeding. There are simpler moments, too, however, such as the guitar piece "Sunlight," with Mays on piano, and Lee and Rodby on electric and acoustic basses. Its easy groove is a resting place in this ambitious work but is so melodically sophisticated, it is another adventure, albeit a simpler one.

Gil Evans could have scored the meld of strings and nylon string guitar on "Always and Forever." "See the World" is a more "traditional" Metheny guitar jazz number, full of lithe syncopation, textural and rhythmic changes, and that striated sense of melody of his that is complex but hummable. The horns and strings add to its sense of grandeur and grace, but it continues to reach ever higher for something seemingly unattainable. Ryan Kisor's trumpet and John Clark's French Horn are also in attendance with Mike Metheny. "Antonia" is so lovely and heart-rending as to be nearly unbearable in its beauty, and Metheny's electric guitar solo is among the most expressive in his recorded career. The groove goes deep and wide, yet it hovers and floats. The strings pulse around it, percussion underscores it, and the melodic frame of the track is open and amazingly delicate. "The Truth Will Always Be" is another suite, a reflective one that goes to the core of what this record is about: it is about love discovered, grasped onto, and lost. It is every bit as regal and poetic as Debussy without the notion of classicism. Despite the lush production in these tunes, on this one it is revealed that these elements are here simply to protect the protagonist from emotions that are so profound and unsettling and tender as to be nearly unbearable. Strings slip in and around Metheny's guitar.

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He lets it bite in just the right places, and more than this, he lets his single lines sing. The strings enter forebodingly into the last cut, "Not to Be Forgotten (Our Final Hour)," but they give way to something simply melancholy that contains all the beauty and heartbreak of the world, the entire recording of a relationship in just over two minutes. The silence at the end of Secret Story is pregnant, almost breathtaking. At the end of 76 minutes the listener cannot help but be absorbed in reminiscences both pleasant and painful, and becomes an empathetic, and perhaps even a sympathetic witness to and participant in Metheny's magical sound world. [Secret Story was reissued with a bonus disc in 2007.] ---Thom Jurek , Rovi

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