Avishai Cohen - Aurora (2009)

01. Morenika 02. Interluce in C Sharp Minor 03. El Hatzipor 04. Leolam play 05. Winter Song 06. Its Been So Long 07. Alon Basela 08. Still 09. Shir Preda 10. Aurora play
11. Alfonsina Y El Mar 12. Noches Noches, La Luz
Personnel: Avishai Cohen (Vocals ,acoustic and electric bass and piano); Karen Malka (Vocals); Amos Hoffman (Oud); Itamar Douari (Percussion).

More than once, someone has incorrectly assumed that bassist Avishai Cohen and trumpeter Avishai Cohen are the same person. It is easy to understand why one could make that mistake; in addition to having the same name, both of them are jazz musicians who grew up in Israel and moved to New York City in the '90s (the bassist ended up moving back to Israel). But they're definitely two different people, and the Avishai Cohen on Aurora is the bassist, not the trumpeter. Aurora finds this Avishai Cohen not only playing acoustic and electric bass, but also playing acoustic piano and electric keyboards and singing. In fact, he does a great deal of singing on this 2008 recording -- which will come as a surprise to those who think of Cohen as strictly an instrumentalist. Aurora is by no means an easy album to categorize; at the risk of oversimplifying things, one possible description could be "world jazz meets post-bop meets adult alternative." Jazz is a prominent ingredient on Aurora, but so are pop/rock and world music -- and Cohen gets a lot of inspiration from Middle Eastern, North African, and Spanish music. He sings in four different languages -- Hebrew, English, Ladino (the language of Spain's Sephardic Jews), and Spanish -- on an album that is dominated by original material but also contains some traditional Jewish songs. But as unpredictable as this 53-minute CD is, Aurora has a certain continuity. Cohen sounds like he knows exactly what he's doing, and he has sympathetic support that includes Amos Hoffman on oud (a traditional Middle Eastern lute) and Karen Malka on vocals (although Cohen is the main vocalist). This album obviously wasn't designed with jazz purists in mind, but listeners who have eclectic tastes will realize that Aurora is a valuable addition to Cohen's catalog. --- Alex Henderson, allmusic.com

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