

Paolo Fresu Devil Quartet - Desertico (2013)

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1. *[I Can't Get No] Satisfaction* 2. *La Follia Italianar* 3. *Ambre* 4. *All Items* 5. *Blame It On My Youth* 6. *Desertico* 7. *Suite for the Devil* 8. *Poetto's Sky* 9. *Voci Oltre* 10. *Young Forever* 11. *Medley A: Ninna Nanna Per Andre* 12. *Medley B: Inno Alla Vita* Paolo Fresu - trumpet, flugelhorn, multi effects Bebo Ferra - electric and acoustic guitars Paolino Dalla Porta - contrabass Stefano Bagnoli – drums

Paolo Fresu is a direct descendant of Chet Baker, and one of the most seductive trumpet players in jazz. That he is not better known in the United States shows that, even in the Information Age, the jazz art form remains regionalized. Fresu is a star in Italy, with a voluminous discography on labels large (ECM) and small (Otá).

The Devil Quartet is Bebo Ferra (guitar), Paolino Dalla Porta (bass) and Stefano Bagnoli (drums). Fresu also has an Angel Quartet with Nguyễn Lê on guitar. The badass in the Devil Quartet is Ferra. He is often edgier and louder than Fresu's typical associates. *Desertico* opens with "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," and while Ferra is nowhere near as nasty as Keith Richards, he does rasp and sting and incite Fresu to boogie.

But it's all relative. Fresu, in angel or devil mode, is a heart-on-sleeve romantic, a purveyor of graceful, flowing lyricism, with a golden, sensual trumpet sound. *Desertico* was recorded by Stefano Amerio, who engineers many ECM albums. Amerio captures Fresu's tone, and therefore the complex emotion it communicates, with clarity.

Those who don't know Fresu's work should go directly to the only standard, "Blame It on My Youth." Ferra's acoustic guitar prepares for Fresu's entrance like a sigh on muted trumpet.

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Fresu only touches the melody intermittently but never loses it. He fragments or expands the song and finds his way deep into the poignancy of lost innocence.

His own tunes, with their elemental melodies, are contexts for the evocation of longing. He can do more than one kind of longing. "Ambre" and "Young Forever" turn up and out, toward joy. "Poetto's Sky" turns inward. "Suite for the Devil" and the title track refuse to choose, and stay mysterious. Paolo Fresu is one soulful cat. --- Thomas Conrad, jazztimes.com

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