

Guitarist GILAD HESKELMAN Pens Ten Tuneful Originals On 3rd Album, Hearts Wide Open

Out Sept 13 on Le Chant Du Monde (Distribution Harmonia Mundi)

Featuring Saxophonist Mark Turner, Bassist Joe Martin, And Drummer Marcus Gilmore



Guitarist Gilad Hekselman's third album, *Hearts Wide Open*, finds him in the company of his working trio with bassist Joe Martin and drummer Marcus Gilmore. They are joined by saxophonist Mark Turner in a set comprised entirely of Hekselman's original material. The title refers to Hekselman's perspective on the practice of music-making. "As musicians, we get to travel and play for different audiences, moving people and creating something positive in the world," he says. "It's about opening our hearts as musicians as well as opening the hearts of listeners."

Hekselman speaks of his bandmates with admiration. "Joe is one of my favorite bass players," he says of his musical colleague of the past 7 years. "He's easy to play with and has a huge round sound on the bass. He has a real awareness of what needs to be happening." He calls Gilmore "addictive to play with. Marcus is so advanced, raw and groovy at the same time. It's how I like drumming to be." The union of Martin and Gilmore provide "a really wide beat," giving Hekselman the space to freely phrase his evocative melodies within the time. Saxophonist Mark Turner's deliberate tenor is an ideal foil to guitarists. Hekselman describes Turner as "a very intelligent player," combining an

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Patricia Johnston

22, rue de Fleurus 75006 PARIS | Tel: | +33 (0) 1.45.49.11.42 | Cel: 33 (0) 6.42.73.06.70
info@taklit.net | www.taklit.net | License Category 2 N° 922020 | SIRET 419 526 876

extensive harmonic knowledge with a deeply-rooted sense of emotion. The clarity of Hekselman's sound and Gilmore's ride cymbal emphasize the craftsmanship of Turner's improvising. "I loved his playing on records for many years, and after I moved to New York I got to hear him more. He's an idol of mine, and one that I can actually call for a gig!"

Whereas Hekselman's previous records were split between his own compositions and standards, *Hearts Wide Open* is the first to exclusively feature his writing. Driven by strong, communicative melodies, the tunes embrace the tradition of song form. Hekselman focused on his own work this time around, because "the feeling of playing a standard is achieved anyway through these tunes. They have a familiar sound to them." "Hazelnut Eyes" is an updated take on the Latin tinge present through all of jazz history; "Brooze" swings in slow motion; and the infectious line of "Flower" bears resemblance to West African pop.

From the opening figure of "One More Song" to his comping sensibility throughout the album, Hekselman's approach to the guitar could be described as pianistic. His main influences have always been pianists and horn players. "When I put on a record just to listen to, it's almost always a piano trio," says Gilad. "The music I got obsessed over as a teenager always featured pianists: Ahmad Jamal, Bill Evans and, more recently, Keith Jarrett and Brad Mehldau. It's been a great challenge and inspiration for me, to think like a pianist on guitar."

Since his arrival in New York, Gilad Hekselman rose to prominence alongside drummer Ari Hoenig and clarinetist Anat Cohen. Both strong bandleaders in different ways, Hekselman's tenure as a sideman has deeply influenced his own work. As the leader of his first tour, Hekselman says, "Ari is a school of rhythm. He hires his band members without really telling them anything. That's the approach I've taken: I surround myself with people I trust. I embrace their changes to my music." With Cohen, Hekselman was exposed to music from around the world. "Anat is a very present bandleader - she knows what she wants on the bandstand and knows how to communicate it well."

From the Tibetan bowl that opens "Prologue," to the powerful rapport exhibited throughout the album, *Hearts Wide Open* is a testament to Gilad Hekselman's emotional journey through music. "The greatest benefit of being a musician," he says, "is making the world a better place."



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