



**CLUB EJAZZ**

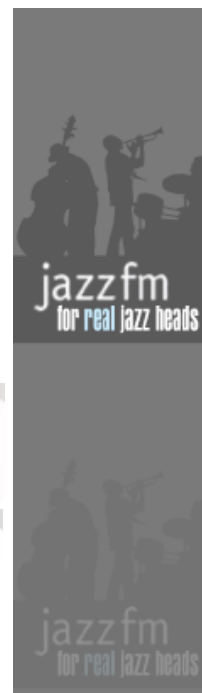
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Saturday 11 November 2006



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**::ALBUM OF THE MONTH**



jazzfm recommends  
**album of the month**  
**MICHEL BENITA - DRASTIC**

Jazzfm Album of the Month

Michel Benita

Drastic

1. This Is The Moment
2. Kpt`n
3. Sky Screen
4. Something`s Wrong
5. Drastic tone
6. Alles Ist Möglich (intro)
7. Alles Ist Möglich
8. Made Already
9. Steel Flown
10. Translating
11. Dub Team
12. Sky Screen (instrumental)
13. Whispering

Michel Benita acoustic and electric basses, guitar, keyboards, percussion, vocals, samples, FX, vocoder computer programming and treatment with:

- Stephanie McKay : vocals
- Jalal The Grandfather of Rap (Revolutionary Arts Proverbalization) : vocals and Spoagraphics (Spoetry)
- Nils-Petter Molvær : trumpet
- Dhafer Youssef : oud, vocals
- Pierre De Bethman : fender rhodes
- Stéphane Guillaume : flutes, bass clarinet
- Kpt`n Planet (Pipon Garcia) : drums, FX, vocals
- Ingrid Rieber : spoken word
- Sampled appearance :
- Archie Shepp, vocals
- Erik Truffaz, trumpet
- Paolo Fresu, trumpet
- Ronnie Patterson, spoken word

BHM Records

Born on July 29th 1954 in Algiers, Michel Benita moved to live in France five years later. He first studied the guitar, then the bass at the Montpellier music academy. His professional career began in 1976 with musicians living in this region, such as Jean-Marc Padovani, Guy Lafitte and Bill Coleman. Benita initial attitude was one of wanting to play as much as possible with as many different musicians as possible and to this end he was willing to travel around and live a real on the edge musical lifestyle. Benita learnt how to be a versatile musician but then decided to study extensively with Henri Texier the celebrated French double bass player.

In 1981, he settled down in Paris. His already solid reputation, his absolute mastery of his instrument as well as his fine and subtle touch attracted numerous musicians, most notably Aldo Romano, Daniel Humair, Enrico Rava, Michel Portal and also international greats, Archie Shepp, Horace Parlan, Kenny Werner and Peter Erskine. In 1986, François Jeanneau, who had played with him in a quartet alongside Marc Ducret and Tony Rabeson, hires him in the first Orchestre National de Jazz. He does numerous tours with them in Europe and Africa, records a double album and plays alongside some prestigious guests: John Scofield, McCoy Tyner and Gil Evans. From 1988 on, Michel Benita started his career as a

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leader. He started to write and record his own compositions in a quartet including the brilliant pianist Rita Marcotulli. Two years later, he released his first album as a leader for the celebrated French jazz label, 'Label Bleu'. Entitled "Préférences", it featured the late great Dewey Redman (s), Rita Marcotulli (p) and Aldo Romano (d). This quartet started to make a name for itself and performed in Sweden, Paris and Italy.

Since then he continued to record and perform in many different situations, including a one month tour of Europe/Asia/Australia with the Dino Saluzzi Family, composing original music for a film "24 Faubourg" and 2 exhibitions by American designer Hilton McConnico. He formed the amazing trio ELB, with Peter Erskine and Nguyễn Lê, recording at the Rainbow Studios in Oslo for ACT and joined forces with the French trumpeter Eric Truffaz for a world tour.

As far as I am concerned, I really started to take notice of Benita on hearing the amazing album he released in 1999 for 'Label Bleu' called "Lower the Walls" with Bobby Thomas, Andy Sheppard and Sylvain Luc. This album I thought was incredible and The Times newspaper wrote "The line-up features bass man Benita, Andy Sheppard on saxophones, Sylvain Luc on guitars, Bobby Thomas on drums, François Verly on tablas and David Linx on occasional vocals. Sheppard is on fine form and the songs form ideal launch points for rewarding, improvisatory essays on guitar, saxophone and plangent double bass, often with marked Eastern flavour". Search this album out if you haven't heard it, you won't be disappointed.

It was with great anticipation that I put this new album in my player and sat back to let the ensuing vibes flow over and into me. "You're going to love this Mike", said the distributor and as usual he was right. This is something different, miles away from anything Benita has done before. An album that completely embraces what is happening in jazz at the moment, especially in Europe (don't go there I hear you cry, not another USA vs Europe article, boring). Off course not, I'm not interested in whether someone thinks its valid or not especially in jazz terms, how long do we have to suffer the is it or isn't it debate, people have only been asking this question for over 70 years now!

There is a strong electronic element to this album but it is never boring. Benita has obviously studied his craft and knowing what we do about his early years this is no surprise. The programming is fantastic, the sounds are complimentary and the grooves are irresistible. Add to this a crisp contemporary production and the icing on the cake, an inspired choice of guests. Jalal from the Last Poets has such amazing presence as befits a man of his stature. Nils Petter Molvaer and Dhafer Youssef are two of the leading lights of the European jazz scene, pushing the boundaries to new levels and are no strangers to yourselves I'm sure. Sax/flute player Stephane Guillaume has long been a favourite of mine as has the incredible pianist Pierre de Bethman (check his work with Prysm and the Moutin Reunion Quartet).

A new name on me is the singer/poet Stephanie McKay who apparently has worked with the likes of Portishead, Soulive, DJ Spinna and Roy Hargrove. She also is a perfect choice for this album both singing and reciting, another one to watch on the ever increasing list of ones to watch!

The album is called Drastic probably because Benita thinks that it's exactly that, especially considering his past and yes I'm sure some of his fans will think its drastic. For me this will open Benita up to a whole new audience that is developing. Live the project also contains a large visual element with the addition of a VJ (video jockey) and I hope that I get the chance to see it somewhere. Very little is really known about Michel Benita apart from the fact that he has always been involved in different and exciting projects and that he isn't afraid to take a chance. Some would say he's Drastic, how about you.

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