

SCOTT KINSEY

Track-by-Track Comments from Scott Kinsey about *We Speak Luniwaz*

“The Harvest” — That’s a hard-grooving tune that features Jimmy Haslip on bass. We played it live in the studio — just Jimmy and Gergö and me. We jammed on that tune for 15 minutes and I whittled it down to what it is now. I got Katisse to add the flute and Danny Carey, the drummer from Tool, added the Simmons drums. It became about the vibe and the momentum of the groove. And the way that Gergö develops from the very beginning of the song to the end is such a slow build, that you don’t notice it happening. It starts off subtly but it’s raging by the time it’s done. And there’s never a particular moment where it kicks in. It’s just a gradual, slow boil throughout. The propulsive motor that Gergö has going on there is tremendous. I think Joe would’ve loved his playing. And Jimmy’s showing another side of his playing too, with the interesting tones of the bass here. He’s got this deep nasty thing going on, and we have some really different kinds of effects on his bass for his solo, which gets into another element that’s unique. I have not heard Jimmy sound quite like this before.

“Victims of the Groove” — Here we’ve got the one and only Bobby Thomas Jr., and it was a thrill to have him. Bobby, of course was on the *Night Passage* record and he was always a key element of that early ‘80s Weather Report sound. It was an honor to work with him because he’s an incredibly spiritual, amazing person and musician. And he’s just as sharp as ever. His percussion style comes from his love of martial arts, so when you see those cymbals way up high, it’s like he’s performing martial arts. He stays fit and you can hear it in his playing, so it was pretty magical to have him on the record. Hadrien makes his first appearance on this track. I took the melodic section and reharmonized the whole thing, so that was something of my own to add to the tune. We also did some different things with the rhythm to put our stamp on it.

“Cucumber Slumber / World Citizen Medley” — The rap here is a piece that Katisse wrote called “World Citizen.” We just took his rhyme, which is an ode to Joe, and incorporated it with “Cucumber Slumber” to have a little medley. Again, it’s an attempt to put our own selves into this music — we’re not trying to be them or play like they did. We’re using the structure and the basic elements of the song and putting our own thing on it. That’s Hadrien laying down the familiar bass groove. And on drums it’s the great Michael Baker, who was a former member of The Zawinul Syndicate. We were also in the Zawinul Legacy Band together and played “Cucumber Slumber” in concert back then.

“We Speak Luniwaz” — This one was very improvisational. That’s Steve Tavaglione on soprano sax, percussionist Cyril Atef and me, basically improvising in the studio. The track is probably 15-20 years old and yet it sounds like we could have recorded it yesterday! It’s just something I kept around and never put on any other record. I might have thought, “Well, this sounds a little bit too much like Joe to put on one of my normal records,” so I just saved it for a rainy day. And suddenly I’m doing this record and I realize, “Oh, I have the perfect song, which encapsulates everything that Joe was about! It’s got complete improvisational interplay, it’s got elements that were in fact probably improvised but still sound compositional, there’s the whole ethnic chanting thing, there’s vocoder, and some synth stuff that sounds very alive and fresh. That’s just something I always wanted to get at because I heard Joe do it and almost nobody else. I always liked this track a lot, but it wasn’t totally finished. I finally had Gergö play on it and once he did that, I felt like it was finally complete. I think the way Gergö plays and interprets this music is pretty special. He really understands where this stuff is coming from and puts an original spin on it too. Gergö killed it with that

forward moving pulse of his! Cyril is on percussion and you can also hear his son Yon, who was just a little kid at the time, talking or yelling in the room while we were playing. It was a very casual session and this track has that feel. It's not contrived or pretentious whatsoever, it's very natural.

“Black Market” — The tempo starts off slower than the original. I just wanted it to have a more relaxed world feeling, a bit more exotic. I'm just imagining where in the world is this black market? What does it look like, feel like? I'm trying to create that atmosphere with the way I'm playing. It's such a strong song in terms of harmony and melody, all these elements that we think about in terms of music, but there is also an intangible aura to it, an element of mystique. It's about a place, a feeling. When I hear people cover “Black Market,” it's usually just that familiar riff at the beginning and they just blaze through it. And that's cool. But I want to get deeper into the vibe, I wanted to go hang out in that market. I had some samples that Joe had given me of the murmuring voices he used on the original recording, so I used them to help create that ambience. Once we hit the chorus of the song, we go back to the normal feel and tempo and play it much truer to the Weather Report version. Katisse takes a nice tenor solo before Arto Tunçboyacıyan goes into what can only be described as ‘vocal beast mode’ — it's a moment where he conjures up some of the interesting characters one might expect to meet at such a market — before we revert back to the slower intro vibes and stroll out of there... on to a much different place.

“Fast City” — The tempo's way, way up there, even faster than the original. Why not? When you have Gergö and Hadrien as a rhythm tandem, you can't put a leash on them. They just want to go, so why not let 'em? We really went for it on this one. Bobby Thomas Jr. is in the mix, which is fantastic. And Katisse takes a really cool tenor solo, which I ended up transcribing, doubling and harmonizing along with him on synthesizers and piano. So in effect, I literally made his solo a composition, in that great Zawinul tradition — turning it into a mini-song within a song. I had a lot of fun with that.

“Running the Dara Down” — That one's brand new. I was thinking of covering Joe's “Dara Factor” itself. Instead, what I ended up doing was something Joe often did — taking the essence of one thing and combining it with other elements — to make something of my own that's inspired by the original track. It's got a little bit of that gospel thing, but it's also got a bit of a trance thing too. I feel the essence of “Dara Factor” is in there. So like “Miles Runs the Voodoo Down” from *Bitches Brew*, this is “Running the Dara Down.” Now I wish that I could ask Joe, “What does Dara really mean?” In Punjabi, it means ‘master’ or ‘leader.’ And that makes total sense. That was Joe. He's the Dara Factor.

“Port of Entry” — There's only one song on this album where Hadrien fully tipped his hat to Jaco Pastorius, who was a huge inspiration for him. He showed his direct appreciation, love and respect for Jaco on that tune. On every other song he's got his own technique and he's playing his other bass, which sounds more like him. But on “Port of Entry” he kind of went for it on fretless and said, “Ok, let's really get back to that thing that Jaco blew us all away with on *Night Passage* and give a little flavor of that.” Arrangement-wise, I actually got my inspiration for this version from some bootlegs I had found. I drew from different places, different versions that I had heard, and pulled them all together for this treatment. And ironically, mine is a studio version while the original Weather Report version was, of course, recorded live.

“Between the Thighs” — We played a different version of this song in the Zawinul Legacy Band, so that's one of the first songs that made me think I would like to make a record of Joe's material. I always thought it was a cool tune and decided to give it a try. It takes its cue from the original a little bit, but the way Gergö plays it is very fresh. His drumming at the end is truly remarkable! It's certainly a drum solo but it's also

incredibly musical. It's amazing how strongly it works to build the drama of the song even higher. That's something few drummers even think about, let alone achieve. I think we updated the tune in a nice way.

“Where the Moon Goes” — This is the other song that Jimmy Haslip plays on. I used the original form as the basis for this version and then expanded on it. We tracked this one at the same time we were recording the vocals for my *No Sleep* album, featuring Naina Kundu. So she sang on this too, and really did a wonderful job. I reharmonized the B section, just to put my own sensibility into the piece. There's an excellent Haslip bass solo and Gergö takes an open drum solo too. Then, as a special finale to the whole record, we jump straight into a tour de force percussion ensemble/vocal chant from Arto! I really think Joe would have loved it. Arto worked with Joe extensively in The Zawinul Syndicate and, of course, Arto and I have our own history together in the Human Element band. It's all in the Zawinul family, so to speak!

Track-by-Track Personnel

1. THE HARVEST

Scott Kinsey: Keyboards, vocoder
 Katisse Buckingham: Flute
 Jimmy Haslip: Electric bass
 Gergö Borlai: Drums
 Danny Carey: Simmons & Mandala Electronic Drums

2. VICTIMS OF THE GROOVE

Scott Kinsey: Keyboards, vocoder
 Katisse Buckingham: Tenor saxophone, flute
 Hadrien Feraud: Electric bass
 Gergö Borlai: Drums
 Bobby Thomas Jr.: Percussion

3. CUCUMBER SLUMBER / WORLD CITIZEN MEDLEY

Scott Kinsey: Keyboards
 Katisse Buckingham: Tenor saxophone, rhymes
 Hadrien Feraud: Electric bass
 Michael Baker: Drums
 Bobby Thomas Jr.: Percussion

4. WE SPEAK LUNIWAZ

Scott Kinsey: Keyboards, vocoder
 Steve Tavaglione: Soprano saxophone
 Hadrien Feraud: Electric bass
 Gergö Borlai: Drums
 Cyril Atef: Percussion, voice
 Brad Dutz: Percussion
 Yon Atef: Voice

5. BLACK MARKET

Scott Kinsey: Keyboards, piano
 Katisse Buckingham: Tenor & soprano saxophones
 Hadrien Feraud: Electric bass
 Gergö Borlai: Drums
 Bobby Thomas Jr.: Percussion
 Arto Tunçboyacıyan: Voice

6. FAST CITY

Scott Kinsey: Keyboards
Katisse Buckingham: Tenor saxophone
Hadrien Feraud: Electric bass
Gergö Borlai: Drums
Bobby Thomas Jr.: Percussion

7. RUNNING THE DARA DOWN

Scott Kinsey: Keyboards
Katisse Buckingham: Soprano saxophone
Hadrien Feraud: Electric bass
Gergö Borlai: Drums
Bobby Thomas Jr.: Percussion, wooden flute, voice

8. PORT OF ENTRY

Scott Kinsey: Keyboards
Katisse Buckingham: Tenor & soprano saxophones
Hadrien Feraud: Electric bass
Gergö Borlai: Drums
Bobby Thomas Jr.: Percussion
Arto Tunçboyacıyan: Percussion, voice

9. BETWEEN THE THIGHS

Scott Kinsey: Keyboards
Katisse Buckingham: Tenor & soprano saxophones
Hadrien Feraud: Electric bass
Gergö Borlai: Drums
Bobby Thomas Jr.: Percussion

10. WHERE THE MOON GOES

Scott Kinsey: Keyboards, vocoder
Naina Kundu: Voice
Katisse Buckingham: Tenor saxophone
Arto Tunçboyacıyan: Percussion
Jimmy Haslip: Electric bass
Gergö Borlai: Drums

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