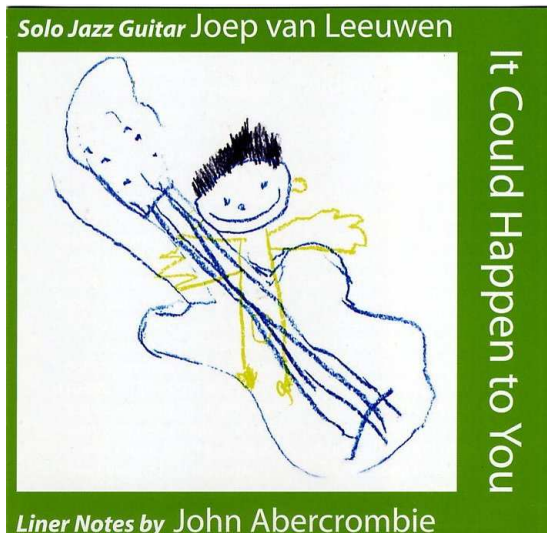


JazzAround Records presents:

“It Could Happen To You”

Solo Jazz Guitar CD by Joep van Leeuwen



Playing and improvising jazz on a guitar solo got started in 1974 with the release of the record “Virtuoso” by Joe Pass. This American was the first to record a whole record with solo jazz guitar. He proved it could be done. Up to then it was considered impossible, which is remarkable as Benny Green pointed in the liner notes to this record: *“But the odd thing about the guitar is that, keeping in mind its virtuoso classical tradition, it ought to be the instrument ideally suited to the production of solo jazz performances. It can convey the nature of harmonic progressions even as it defines the melody, exactly as a piano can, and it is also a recognized rhythm instrument. And yet there have been almost no guitarists who ever attempted what Joe Pass pulls off so prodigiously on the album.”*

Bottom line: it is just very hard to do! With the usual rhythm section of drums, bas and piano missing, the solo jazz guitarist has to provide his own bass lines and chordal accompaniment. Not only does the solo jazz guitarist improvise – which takes up a lot of concentration already - he has to be able to immediately provide a bass line and/or a chord after he finished improvising a section. Where the piano player has his left hand to play chords and bass lines, the guitarist does all this with just one hand, the other hand being occupied with producing the sound by picking the strings.

On the one hand it is hard to play without a rhythm section, on the other hand however, playing without it opens up possibilities that are not possible when playing in a group. The solo guitarist can go in and out of tempo freely, use different chords, change keys, all kinds of musical possibilities not possible when playing in a group.

This is where another American guitar player comes in, John Abercrombie: *“Solo Guitar is one of the most, if not the most challenging of tasks. Joep Van Leeuwen (my friend and colleague for many years now) makes this Leap of Faith, in the most Musical way”*. This quote is from the liner notes to Joep van Leeuwens’ new solo cd “It Could Happen To You”. Like Joe Pass he plays a repertoire of well known swing jazz standards on this record (as he does on his live performances). However Joep expands the repertoire to include Bossa Nova’s. On the swing pieces he plays walking bass lines. For the Bossa’s he has arranged the compositions in such a way that the bossa bass movements can be executed on the guitar together with the main melody. To this repertoire he adds two modern compositions: “Careful” by Jim Hall and “Ralph’s Piano Waltz” by John Abercrombie. On this record Joep van Leeuwen plays a unique acoustic L7 Gibson guitar from 1939. John Abercrombie expresses his appreciation about both Joep’s way of playing and the type of instrument he plays on: *“To do this is indeed difficult, but to do it on an old 1939 Gibson archtop guitar, recorded only with a mike and no extra goodies like reverb/delay, etc., is really taking a big risk”*.

Tracks

It Could Happen to You opens with a rubato statement of the first half the theme. The next tempo section finishes the theme and takes it into the improvisation. After this the tempo is abruptly taken to rubato again and the theme is played again, this time with beautiful new harmonies. For the ending, the piece is taken in tempo again. *Corovado* and *Meditation* are the two bossa nova’s on this cd and get a straight ahead in tempo reading. *Corcovado* here is played with its original intro. For *Meditation* Joep plays the melody both times in the key of G, whereas the improvisation is in the key of C. *Sometime Ago* is a standard jazz waltz. In his interpretation Joep plays the melody single line. The omission of chords brings out the beauty of the melody. *I got it Bad and that Ain’t Good* and *Polkadots and Moonbeams* are the two ballads on this cd. They go in and out of tempo at will and provide some interesting reharmonisation. The opening melody of

Polkadots...has an interesting descending line. In *Line for Lyons* Joep does something unique in that he plays both melody lines. This is no mean feat on a guitar and really does justice to the unique Gerry Mulligan composition. Most of his piece had a second melody next to the main melody. With this he created the unique sound of his pianoless quartet with Chet Baker (and Bob Brookmeyer). Comments by Joep van Leeuwen on *Ralph's Piano Waltz* and *Careful* can be found in the cd booklet. Miles Davis' *Nardis* gets a special treatment. The first A-sections are out of tempo and the bridge – kind of a sudden – is in time as are the last 8 bars. The improvisation deals eloquently with the hard harmonic context of this piece. The second theme has a variation on the melody in that it is played backwards. *On Green Dolphin Street* was composed in such a way that it mixes swing and latin rhythms. For most of the performance Joep stays true to this but allows the improvisation allows the swing to prevail. Joep takes this piece through four keys: A, C, Eb, Gb and finally A major again. *Stompin' at the Savoy* finished the cd with one important message: swing!

Joep van Leeuwen

Joep van Leeuwen (1955) studied classical guitar at the Maastrichts Conservatorium, NL. Already during his studies he was actively involved in jazz. After graduating he left his native city of Maastricht in 1980 and moved to Berne, Switzerland where he studied jazz guitar, composing and arranging on a scholarship at the Swiss Jazz School. Regularly he performed in both Switzerland and Holland with bands consisting of students of this conservatory of jazz music.

In 1985 he returned to Maastricht and joined the faculty of the jazz department of the Maastricht Conservatorium. Apart from guitar he also teaches ensemble playing and lectures on the history of jazz. From 1995 to 2001 he co-headed the jazz department and from 1996 to 2007 he headed the Master program of the Zuid-Nederlandse Hogeschool voor Muziek. He was recently appointed as a member of the conservatory-university research group for "Autonomy and the Public Domain." For this group he researched the way in which a jury at a musical conservatory (Conservatoire supérieure) assesses a musical performance in the bachelor and masters programs. This research will be published shortly under the title "Professional Music Assessment".

From 1992 to 1997 he was on the European board of the International Association of Jazz Educators. From 1993 to 1997 he was the European Coordinator of this worldwide organisation of jazz musicians.



As a player he is active in settings ranging from solo guitar to big band and from Swing to Nu Jazz. He has performed with Peter Leitch, Garrison Fewell, John Stowell, Marc Nightingale, Jack Coenen, Mark Turner, Robert Jeanne, Toon Roos, Leo Janssen, Marc Frankinet, Ruud Breuls, Rob Bruynen (and big band Brownie Speaks), Antoine Cirri, Arnoud Gerritse, Hans Braber, Bruno Castellucci, Sal LaRocca, Jean-Louis Rassinfosse, Hans Mantel, Janice Lakers, Susanne Schneider, Sabine Kühlich, Hilde Vanhove, Digna Janssen, Frank Giebels, Berendt van de Berg and others. In the Nu Jazz band Don't Git Sassy! he also plays guitar synthesizer. He played at major

international festival: Montreux Jazz festival (1999, 2000, 2003), Maastricht Jazz Mecca (1992) and Music Nights (1998), Jazzfestival Liege (2005)

On November 27 2005 he was awarded the prestigious Jerry van Rooyen Award during the Jazztival, one of Maastrichts Jazzfestivals. Jerry van Rooyen is one of Hollands foremost arrangers/composers.

His solo guitar playing led him to Boston, Ma., USA in January 1994 where he conducted a clinic on this subject for the annual conference of the International Association of Jazz Educators (IAJE). In January 1995 Rick Stone invited him to play in New York City. In 1996 he did a clinic and a concert on solo guitar playing for the Montreux Jazz Festival.

As a composer Joep van Leeuwen has written many jazz themes next to compositions for specific ensembles and synthesizer guitar. He has a special interest in the guitar-trombone duo. The duo he has with trombonist Jack Coenen plays his originals. This duo performed for the Maastrichtse jazzfestival Music Nights (1998) and twice for the Montreux Jazzfestival (1999 & 2000). He has also recorded with the British trombonist Mark Nightingale. In 2003 the duo with Nightingale played for the Montreux Jazz festival.

From 1996 to 2001 Joep van Leeuwen published on a weekly basis on Jazz for the Dutch newspaper Limburgs Dagblad. His writings were also regularly published in the monthly magazine Jazz News. His knowledge of jazz history makes him a sought after person for regular publications and lectures on jazz and blues. A series of his articles on the history of Third Stream Music appears currently in the Belgium Jazz Magazine "Jazzmozaïek".

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