

Chalkboard Destiny – Q & A with Lisa Hilton
Lisa Hilton - Piano, JD Allen - Tenor Saxophone,
Rudy Royston - Drums, Luques Curtis - Bass

Q. *Another new release – how many is that now?*

A: Lisa Hilton: I have recorded twenty-two releases in the US & two in Asia, so twenty-four total. There's a couple of compilations that my work has also appeared on!

Q. *You must be very disciplined, to put out new recordings every year, right?*

A: I don't look at it that way at all! I have a deep love for composing and I appreciate growing the music through the recording and touring aspects. It takes years to develop your skill set, but now I get to devote time doing what I love and touching people's lives musically around the world annually. That's enjoyable and gratifying for me on so many levels so I don't view it as work...it's fun!

Q. *Tell us about the concept for Chalkboard Destiny.*

A: The last two to three years have seemed unusually full of tumult on our planet: from politics to climate catastrophes. I'm not even sure when this kind of flux last happened. But it's starting to sink in that this is our new normal, so I started looking at the advantages of living in a time of accelerated change. It's a time to rewrite history, to bust myths, to create our own fantasies perhaps and to forge a new destiny towards our future. Artistically, it's a fertile time, that I choose to explore – I think you can hear that blend of jazz traditions within a new context on the album – and can hear a bit of influence from Count Basie and Horace Silver.

Q. *...and some Coltrane too...*

A: Yes, JD reminds me of Coltrane. I've worked with him since 2009, and I've toured and recorded with JD, Rudy and Luques a few times too, so there is a feeling of family – I believe you can hear that connection. I love Luques's cool bass lines, and Rudy's articulation for details as well as JD's colossal sound. I'm a big fan of my bandmates!

Q. *It does sound like you guys work really well together, really complimenting each other's style.*

A: We really enjoyed the recording process. We never rehearse, I just introduce the composition and then we play, so everything you hear is unfolding in the moment and it creates a tension you can hear. My favorite track was *Sympathy for Blues* – that piece just explodes in the middle section! Luques said he liked the *Rush Hour Rhapsody* best with its old school vibe, and Rudy said he wished he had written *Temporary Lullaby* himself, which is kind of him. JD said he especially liked *Waltz From Nowhere* and the 'Spanish tinge' of *Myths & Fantasy* which is interesting. He sounds very classically inspired on those tracks.

Q. Is there a story behind the Joni Mitchell track, *Blue Boy*?

A: Joni Mitchell is an incredible composer and *Blue Boy* is a very strong composition. I seem to be drawn more to composers who are women and I think it's important to support women in my industry too – most jazz standards are all written by men, so we need to work towards greater parity. I think Joni was referring to her lover, Leonard Cohen, in her lyrics and the inevitable demise of that relationship.

In the studio the band was a bit reluctant to record it - I don't think they really knew the piece. So I told them what I heard in my head, and played it though once for them. Then we did two breathtakingly beautiful takes together. Thankfully afterwards everyone was like, "Great idea" – They loved it, so I'm really glad we *did* record it! It's a great tune and I love everyone's contributions on it.

Q. I noticed you worked again with top tier engineers Al Schmitt, Fernando Lodeiro, Gavin Lurssen and Reuben Cohen.

A: I first worked with (twenty-three time Grammy® Award-winning engineer) Al Schmitt in 2003. I admire him as an artist in his field and a very inspiring person too. In 2009, on *Twilight & Blues*, Fernando Lodeiro worked with us and we professionally clicked, and now he's a Grammy® Award-winning engineer too! I have worked with Gavin Lurssen since 1997 and his business partner Reuben Cohen for several years – they have their share of Grammy's® as well. I really care about the sound, and I'm lucky to have these steadfast relationships with the best engineers in the world.

Q. When do you start your touring?

A: January 9th at [Weill Recital Hall within] Carnegie Hall – I think it's my sixth year in a row that week at Carnegie - I like the big Steinway they have! We'll also do a show for The Perkins School for the Blind in Boston – I always try and be supportive of students who are visually impaired. There will be performances in Chicago, Los Angeles, Santa Cruz and the Bay Area next Spring as well.

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