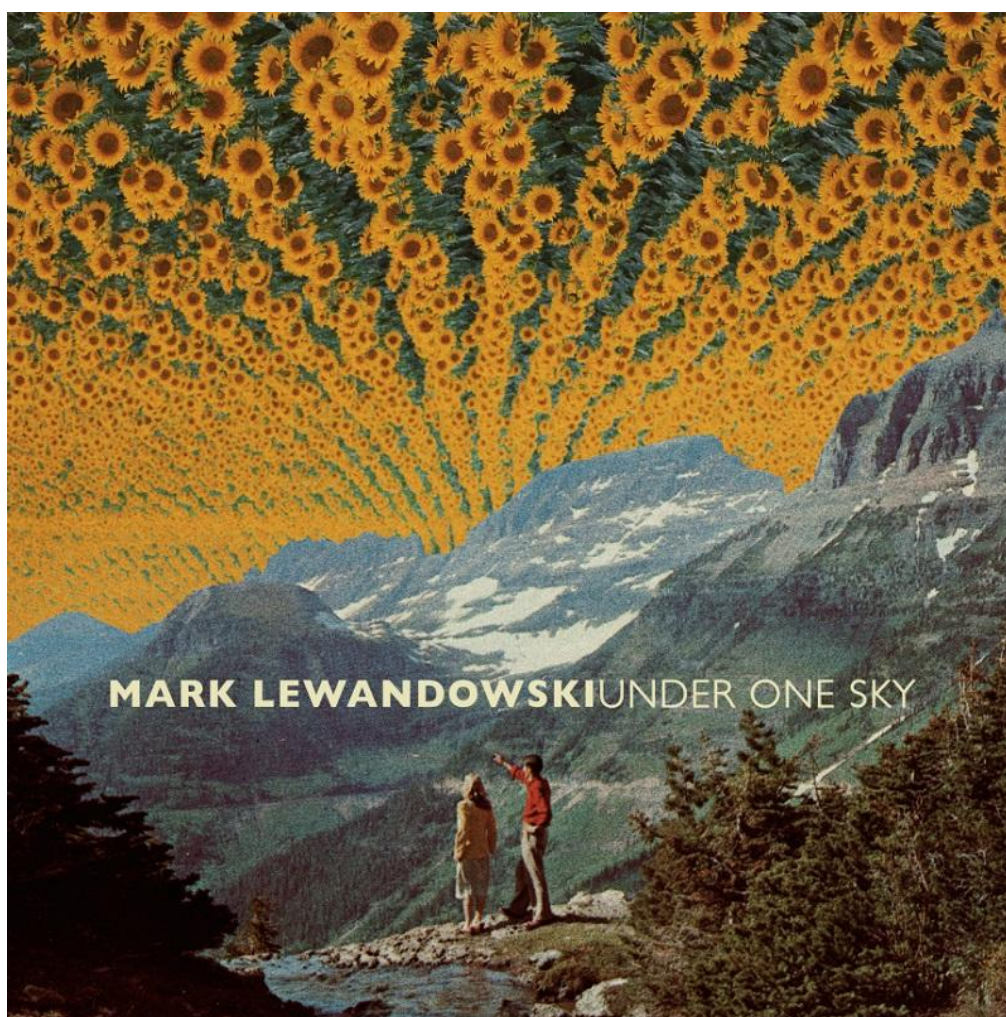




JazzTokyo

Jazz and Far Beyond

Translated from Japanese



#2134 "MARK LEWANDOWSKI / UNDER ONE SKY"

[November 6, 2021 Satoshi Saito](#)

Text by Akira Saito

>> [Bandcamp sales site](#)

Mark Lewandowski (bass)

Addison Frei (piano)

Kush Abadey (drums)

1. Introduction (3459 Miles)
2. Licks
3. Provavus
4. For Paul Bley
5. The Same Moon
6. Islands
7. Very Well
8. Queen of the Orchid
9. For Andrew Hill
10. Skyline
11. Under One Sky

All Compositions by Mark Lewandowski

Recorded at Acoustic Recording, Brooklyn, NY (Jun, 2021)

Recorded by Michael Brorby (Brooklyn, NY)

Mixed and Mastered by Alex Bonney (London)

Produced by Mark Lewandowski

Assistant Producers – Addison Frei & Kush Abadey

Executive Producer – Mark Lewandowski

Original artwork by Naomi Allen

Design by Kassandra Charalampi

Mark Lewandowski is a bassist originally from England, and it has been over four years since he moved from London to New York in 2017. Since moving, he studied under the bassist maestro Henry Grimes, and together with Grimes' wife, Margaret, the three of them have traveled to see live shows all over New York. It was around this time that I first got to know Lewandowski. I remember that Grimes happened to be sitting next to me, and his friendly wife introduced me to Lewandowski.

That said, Lewandowski's bass playing is completely different from Grimes's. While Grimes's sound is sometimes as hard as a dinosaur's stomping, Lewandowski's is soft. The sound, presented alongside Addison Frei's piano with its delicate chords and Kush Abadi's drums with

their eye-opening delicacy and speed, is simple yet complex, with subtle shifts and gradations that are quite captivating. This is because Lewandowski's bass playing permeates the entire sound like a solvent. The leaping rhythms and phrases are almost dancing, yet far more light-hearted than Dave Holland's. And the way he leads the trio on "Provavus," for example, is powerful yet elegant. The bass solos on "The Same Moon" and "Very Well" are evocative of the trembling strings.

The album he recorded just before leaving London was "Waller" (Whirlwind Recordings). It features the same piano trio as this album, but the atmosphere is completely different. As the title suggests, it's a work dedicated to the great entertainer of yesteryear, Fats Waller, so it's perhaps natural that it exudes an uplifting, cheerful quality. However, the fact that both of these conceptually different sounds come together so naturally is undoubtedly due to the artist's ability to see the sound as a whole.

This album also includes pieces dedicated to other great pianists, Paul Bley and Andrew Hill. Just like Fats Waller on his previous album, and Henry Grimes, who passed away due to complications from COVID-19, as well as Bley and Hill, Lewandowski has a jazz history within him, one that is flexibly connected to the present.



◆Mark Lewandowski Interview (Answered October 26, 2021)

- What did you learn from Henry Grimes (bass)? Or were there any memorable concerts you went to together?

Henry Grimes was my hero. I first met him when I saw him play with Marc Ribot (guitar) at the incredible Café Oto in London. From then on, I studied with him, we talked, we hung out, and we built a great relationship. He taught me about openness in music (after all, he played with a huge range of people, from Benny Goodman (clarinet) to Albert Ayler (saxophone)), and especially about sound. He truly connected with great musicians who loved his personal approach to bass playing. We shared many happy times playing together, sometimes at his apartment. He and his wife, Margaret, were always out checking out music, having sit-ins, and encouraging young musicians. They were like grandparents to me—when I arrived in New York with just my bass and a suitcase, they picked me up at the airport and drove me to the house I live in now. Of course, there are many memorable concerts I accompanied him to, but perhaps what I'll always remember is how the musicians always acknowledged his presence. I remember going to see Roy Haynes (drums) at the Blue Note in New York. Roy stood up, picked up the microphone, and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, with us tonight is the great master Henry Grimes." I also remember Henry and I visiting Cecil Taylor (piano) in the hospital a few years ago. Cecil was lying facing the wall. We walked in, and without turning or looking, he said, "The day my father died, I asked you to join the band, Henry Grimes." Cecil sensed Henry's presence; he knew he was there without even seeing him. That shows how deep and strong their relationship was. I was deeply saddened when Henry passed away, but I have fond memories of him, and every recording reminds me of what a great person and musician he was.

- What are the differences between the London and New York scenes?

First of all, I want to say that both London and New York are "jazz cities" that are fascinating and important to me. Both have significant historical contributions and have fostered and sustained the art form. I've been fortunate to have worked with musicians from both cities, and this has profoundly influenced my approach to performing and composing. My new album, "Under One Sky," is dedicated to how both places have influenced me. Music expresses a sense of place, and identity is important for improvising musicians. London has a wonderfully diverse and creative jazz scene, with plenty of venues, a wealth of intelligent and unique musicians, and a strong education system. New York has such a vibrant energy and is dazzling with the incredible array of musicians gathered in the same place. You can go out any night of the week and hear world-class greats and current masters. I've always dreamed of moving to New York since I started performing, and I'm incredibly happy and proud that it's finally come true. It's a very difficult place to live, but for musicians, the sacrifices are worth it -- that's where my life is now. But the musical identities of the two cities are different. New York's American roots make the blues more important to the music here. There's a wonderfully creative and rich music here, but it's still a bebop city. People value the art of swing. There's no substitute for the musical urgency of New York, especially for drummers. What I love about London is the work of composers. Music is deeply personal, and musicians' sense of identity from their

British (and other) backgrounds is audible in the music. Londoners really value the craft of composition. As a British musician living in New York, I too tried to balance these different elements on this album. Of course, I'll always miss London -- especially my friends, the beauty of the city, and the delicious Turkish food!

- The pieces dedicated to Paul Bley (piano) and Andrew Hill (piano) are wonderful and remind us of their individual personalities.

I have deep respect and awe for my predecessors. Paul Bley and Andrew Hill embody a creative spirit that takes the blues and pushes it forward with a heavy, bebop-inspired sound. However modern their sound may sound, it's part of piano history, and the richness of their playing is etched in history. I've tried to do the same with the bass, although I've always been drawn to pianists. If I were to play another instrument, it would probably be the piano. I love and actually envy the ability pianists have to collaborate with others. The music of Paul Bley and Andrew Hill is cyclical. They value the importance of composition, and motifs from written scores emerge through improvisation. I draw inspiration from them when I compose. Various themes and melodies are woven throughout the piece. I also love the quiet they evoke, even when they contain a large number of notes. "Their many balances, sounds, and flow remind me of water. Their approach to composition and improvisation is impressionistic, which is why their music seems so visual. The care that older musicians take in music through the craftsmanship that goes into creating it is deeply inspiring. I recently had the opportunity to perform separately with two living masters: the great drummer Joe Chambers and the great saxophonist Dave Liebman. Similarly, the level of detail, focus, and care in the entire music-making process was incredibly inspiring to me as a young musician."

- How are your activities going during the coronavirus pandemic?

Yes, what's unique about this terrible pandemic is that it affects every single human being on this planet. I don't want to dwell on how much time has passed; it's nothing compared to what so many have suffered. Of course, I lost all my jobs, and life and social interactions have become incredibly difficult. I've stayed in New York and am proud to be a part of the effort, however small, to reboot the music scene. I've become incredibly close to friends and colleagues I didn't know before. I'm hopeful that once things return to normal, there will be something of a renaissance in music. I also hope that people will begin to value artists more and recognize the importance of music and art in our social environment. I was fortunate to be able to make this album during this time. I attempted to do it all myself, without the help of a label. Initially, I was inspired by musicians like Jason Moran (piano) and Dave Douglas (trumpet) in connecting directly with listeners and narrowing the gap between musician and listener by releasing music on Bandcamp. It was a huge learning curve, but I couldn't be happier with the results. I'm grateful to my incredible colleagues Addison Frye (piano) and Kush Abadi (drums) for the care, attention and love they put into this album.



Satoshi Saito

Akira Saito's books include "New Emissions Rights" and "The Art of Toru Saito: A Movement Depicted by the Double Bass." He has also co-authored "Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Emissions Trading," "Is This Okay with the Fukushima Nuclear Accident Reporting?", "Abe Kaoru 2020: No One Was There Before Me," "AA: Albert Ayler 50 Years Later" (edited by Shigetsugu Hosoda), "An Anthology of Open Music: Free Jazz & Free Music 1981-2000," and "Motoki Takagi: Pioneer of Free Jazz Saxophone." He has contributed to publications such as "JazzTokyo," "ele-king," "Voyage," "New York City Jazz Records," "Jazz Right Now," "Taiwan Beats," "Offshore," "Jaz.in," and "Music Magazine." His blog is available at <http://blog.goo.ne.jp/sightsong>