

# Mp3 Greg Skaff - East Harlem Skyline

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Soulful, funky Guitar/Hammond B3/drums trio jazz - with guest stint by Rolling Stones bassist Darryl Jones. 10 MP3 Songs in this album (58:05) ! Related styles: JAZZ: Soul-Jazz, JAZZ: Hammond Organ

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With East Harlem Skyline, his second ZOHO release after the successful 2004 Ellington Boulevard, New York guitarist Greg Skaff again stakes his claim on the rich territory of the organ trio. Special guests: Darryl Jones (Rolling Stones, Sting, Miles Davis, Eric Clapton) and Charley Drayton (Keith Richards X-Pensive Winos, Herbie Hancock, Fiona Apple, Paul Simon). With his blues-drenched sensibility, rhythmic assuredness, strong affinity for swing , bop and funk, and his capability of blowing at breakneck tempos with ease, Skaff fits neatly into that great lineage of stellar organ trio / guitarists Wes Montgomery, George Benson, Pat Martino and Grant Green. Along with his current trio with drummer E.J. Strickland and organist George Colligan, Skaff sails through a collection of ballads, blues, burners and boogaloos with warm tone, pristine articulation, percussive attack and impressive chops. East Harlem Skyline features 6 new Skaff originals, plus 4 covers of songs by Wayne Shorter, Fiona Apple, George Colligan and Billy Strayhorn. For the first time in ZOHOs five-year history, and perhaps in the Jazz CD business, Gregs CD release will receive a spectacular, highly attention-grabbing lenticular print CD cover insert which will give the package graphics a multi-dimensional appearance which changes depending on the viewing angle. Due to its extremely high expense, this new technology has in the past only been used on major label DVD and CD releases "Guitar / Hammond B3 and drums trios have always fascinated me. The first jazz I heard, both on recordings and live, were organ groups. George Bensons recording Its Uptown changed the way this young rock guitarist looked at the possibilities of his instrument. And artists like Jack McDuff and Lou Donaldson - featuring Lonnie Smith, who was also part of Bensons quartet- made my home town of Wichita, KS part of their Midwest tour circuit, playing entire weeks at a club that brought them twice a year, thereby allowing me to see up close how it all worked. Ever since organ players like Jimmy Smith, Don Patterson and Richard Groove Holmes used guitar in their groups, the combination of guitar organ became unbeatable. Its easy for a jazz guitarist to feel comfortable in that

setting. For one, he can comp during the organ solos without feeling like hes getting in the way. This is because the organists left hand is busy playing the bass line, as opposed to a piano player, who generally prefers to use the left hand to accompany himself. As far as the material played, there are certain grooves that seem to go hand-in-hand with the organ format. You can pretty much bet that there will be a certain amount of swinging, funk and sanctification, elements that were essential to jazz organ groups from the 1950s on. After having recently worked around New York City with a B 3 trio consisting of George Colligan on organ and E. J. Strickland on drums, it seemed logical to record with them. Both are composers and bandleaders, as well as being sidemen in demand, so they know how to bring out the best in the music that is presented to them. Georges approach to the Hammond B3 is deep into the tradition of the instrument, but not to the extent that it prevents his own voice to be clearly heard. And E.J. is familiar with the vernacular of the organ groups (I first heard him with Jimmy Smiths group), but at the same time has plenty of experience working in a variety of different settings. The material we play on our new ZOHO CD release East Harlem Skyline might seem surprising in the context of an organ group. For example, you wont hear a down and dirty shuffle, or even a blues. Well, actually there is a blues included, but it may not be of the sort one might first expect to hear from an organ trio. But in the end it all seems to work. Willie D is named after a seminal figure in American music, blues man, songwriter and bassist Willie Dixon. For that reason, this is the one track where there is a bass player as opposed to the organ player providing the bass with his left hand or the bass pedals - thus making the group a quartet. The bass riff and the first line of the melody are musically related to a song written by the great drummer, Victor Lewis, who also happens to be a great composer. Victors songs make me wish I had written them. A few years ago I had the opportunity to play some of his music and one song, Ella Dunham stuck in my head. The bass line in Willie D has an earthy feel that reminds me of something Willie Dixon might have played. This track also features a different rhythm section than the rest, including, appropriately enough, another Chicago-bred bass player, Darryl Jones. Darryls incredible credentials as a musician are widely known he has toured and recorded with Miles Davis, Sting, Madonna, Eric Clapton, and Herbie Hancock, and he has replaced Bill Wyman in the concert and touring line-up of The Rolling Stones, after Bill retired in 1993. - The rhythm section, completed by George Laks on organ and Charley Drayton on drums, lays it down undeniably from beginning to end. Charleys impressive credentials include session overdub percussion on the 1985 Rolling Stones album Dirty Work, stints with Keith Richards X-Pensive Winos and

Divinils, and work with Herbie Hancock, Johnny Cash, Neil Young, Fiona Apple, Janet Jackson and many others. Contrary To Popular Motion, the title being a play on words, began as a tribute to Wes Montgomery and was inspired by the kind of lines he plays. In particular, the melody in the third and fourth bars reminded me of something I've heard Wes play. In the 10th and 11th bars the chords descend while the bass line ascends, thus moving in contrary motion to each other. - Wayne Shorters Angola is a deceptively straightforward melody that seems simple at first listen. It consists of only two four-bar phrases in an AABA form, but within those phrases, the chord changes move in an interesting way that make them very challenging to improvise over. Tropicalia is a song that was inspired by my reading singer Caetano Veloso's autobiography, Tropical Truth. Tropicalia is the name for a musical movement in Brazil that started in the late 1960s. I also took a page from the music of another Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos, and I tried to emulate the colors of the harmonies in his music. Yasmines Dance is named after my daughter. Ever since she was about three years old, she would put on a costume and dance around the house very dramatically a la Isadora Duncan. Twenty Three, so named because of the number of bars in the melody, began with the first part of the melody dancing around in my head, which then took on some different elements. Even though the melody may have some uneven phrase lengths, George and E. J. make it all sound natural and logical. - Lodestar is a tribute to John Coltrane, the point of reference being his composition Equinox. Somewhere along the way as I was writing it, the basic groove morphed into 7/4 time. E. J. provides an undercurrent that's perfect for the feel. Sooner or later, all jazz guitarists have to reckon with the solo guitar concept. I had the pleasure of performing Billy Strayhorn's Lotus Blossom as a duet with the late John Hicks a few years back. He made me realize how much music there is in that song. This is my first recording of a solo guitar piece. Thanks to my teacher, Michael Lorimer, for help with the arrangement. - Ultimatum, by George Colligan has an inherent swinging quality to the melody. George has several releases under his own name as well as being a sideman with Cassandra Wilson, Buster Williams and others. Fiona Apple is a heavy songwriter with a highly personal style. She has so many good songs that it's hard to pick a favorite. Because her lyrics are so integral to her songs, and because of her singing style it's a challenge to play a song like Fast As You Can as an instrumental. Even though her arrangement of the song is ingrained in my brain, we opted to take some liberties with it. Hopefully, that's what jazz and my music - is all about." Greg Skaff, November 1, 2008 Tracks 2-10 Recorded November 9, 2007 at Avatar Studios, NYC. Engineer: Anthony Ruotolo.

Second Engineer: Francisco Lodeiro. Track 1, Willie D recorded March 31, 2008 At One East Studios, NYC. Engineer: Matt Wells. Second Engineer: John Valencia. Mixed by Anthony Ruotolo. Mastered by Steve Fallone at Sterling Sound. All Photography by Matt Rogers except photo of Charley Drayton: Rob Shanahan, photo of Darryl Jones: Sabrina Lee, photo of George Laks: Mindy Laks, photo of Greg Skaff on outer tray card: Tory Williams. Package Design by Al Gold. Produced by: Greg Skaff. Executive Producer: Joachim Jochen Becker.

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