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Pianist & Composer

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“This Was Now” by jazz pianist Daniel Meron - In pursuit of heightened awareness, established composer and bandleader records an improvised solo piano album of cover songs (released 2/28/18 on Rabbit Rabbit Rabbit Records).

Pianist and composer Daniel Meron is part of a special generation of people who remember living in a world without internet, smartphones, or social media, but have fully integrated these inventions into their lives and career. While admitting that being constantly connected to the global community through technology can be exciting and invigorating, Meron, an Israeli-born and Brooklyn-based jazz musician also sees the damaging effect of this existence on our lives. “Having to multitask regularly, and being available and in communication with the world twenty-four seven, I felt a disconnect within myself and that I was losing the ability to focus on just one activity at a time”.

This reality is what eventually led the critically acclaimed composer and bandleader, whose first two records were praised by magazines such as *All About Jazz* and legendary musicians including Joe Lovano, to record a solo piano album of cover songs, to be released on Rabbit Rabbit Rabbit Records on February 28th, 2018. “Improvisation is my greatest joy. It is my home-base when composing and working out new concepts on the piano.” explains Meron. “My ability to concentrate for long periods of time is essential to staying inspired and following my musical intuition”. The challenges of modern life and technology started taking a toll on Meron’s creative process, and he wasn’t ready to give in. “Like many artists, I’m the toughest critic of my own work. When your focus is lost, the self-criticising voice takes over and judges every note you play”.

Realizing he needed to gain back his sense of awareness and equanimity, Meron turned to meditation practice. Daily exercises and a ten-day Vipassana silent retreat led Meron to believe that meditation can not only affect his music but also improve his life as a whole. “I found a state of mind where I can be free of all judgment and really focus on the present moment. I am by no means a Buddhist monk, but I now know that this mental state is within reach, and I’m continuously working on bringing it into everything I do”.

In the winter of 2016 Meron decided to book a recording session at a studio in Brooklyn to document any changes to his playing brought about by these practices. “The idea was to minimize the rehearsed portion of the music and focus on free flow improvisation. I wanted to see if I can stay present in the *now* and let inspiration lead me, free of the inner-critic, while recording live”. Meron chose to record only standards and popular songs that he was enjoying during that period. “I purposely refrained from playing my original music so I can be more free of self-judgment. I knew something good was happening when I noticed an old familiar feeling creeping in - the joy of simply playing”.

The result is an album of personal interpretations of well known tunes, where the creative process is felt in each passage. This interesting mix of musical selections includes jazz standards, American Songbook classics, an Israeli traditional melody about the biblical king David, a Teen-Pop-Rock hit, a Bob Marley song, and one free improvisation (entitled 2:35pm).

Another intriguing aspect of this record is Meron's choice to include two contrasting versions of some of the jazz standards (like Ellington's "I Got It Bad"). By adding the actual recording time to those track names in parenthesis, Meron is providing the listener with the feeling of ever-changing reality where nothing stays the same for too long.

Whether it's in the opening track "Body and Soul", which Meron begins with what is traditionally the second part of the song, or in the densely-chorded and soulful intro to Marley's "Redemption Song", Meron lets the music lead him to unexpected places, exploring a wide range of moods and grooves. To summarize with Daniel Meron's own words about the album's title: "*This Was Now* describes exactly what this album is - a capturing of a moment that was sincere and true for that day in the studio. A portrait of where I was emotionally, mentally and musically at that point in time".