



Photo of James Singelton: Dominic Dagradi / of Eivind Austad: Øystein Fyfe / of Johnny Vidachovic from Asval Project website

The 1947 film *New Orleans* tells a pretty straightforward story about a casino owner and a singer falling in love. The story takes place, however, in 1917, and one of the songs featured in the film is famous: "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans?" written by Eddie DeLange and Louis Alter, and performed in the movie by Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday. Whether the story's set in 1917 and a certain beginning of the blues, or the film's set in 1947, this song is about looking back and about memories. One could say that in a number of American musical forms, missing New Orleans is a feature. This New Orleans is a musical

and cultural melting pot, a mixture of different tastes and styles, and a reservoir for future music.

In 2014, Eivind Austad travelled to New Orleans, where he met bassist James Singelton and drummer Johnny Vidachovic, two of the most sought-after musicians keeping the city's music alive. They played together, which inspired Austad to contact them again with plans for making this album, recorded in New Orleans in 2018.

This is an album "about" New Orleans in the sense that the music explores a feeling of New Orleans. The tracks – some of Austad's own compositions, some classics – are templates for this exploration.

Eivind Austad New Orleans Trio

James Singelton That Feeling Johnny Vidachovic



Eivind Austad New Orleans Trio That Feeling

Losen Records LOS 248-2

1. **724 Blues** (Eivind Austad) 6:02
2. **Soul of a Twain** (Eivind Austad) 4:26
3. **Basin Street Blues** (Spencer Williams) 8:24
4. **Turnaround** (Ornette Coleman) 9:29
5. **Esplanade Drive** (Eivind Austad) 6:52
6. **Something** (George Harrison) 4:19
7. **What a Friend We Have in Jesus** (Charles C. Converse) 5:17
8. **That Feeling** (Eivind Austad) 2:13

Total Time 47:02

Eivind Austad piano
James Singelton bass
Johnny Vidachovic drums

Recorded February 26, 2018 by Jesse Snider at Esplanade Studios, New Orleans, USA
Mixed October 18-25, 2019 by Davide Bertolini, The Grieg Academy, Bergen, Norway
Mastered August 2020 by Morten Lund at Lund's Lyd, Oslo, Norway
Produced by Thomas T. Dahl, Co-produced by Eivind Austad
Executive producer Odd Gjelsnes
Front cover photo by Kjersti Holst
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The compositions are relatively simple, meaning that the musicians can focus on co-creating a feeling grounded in New Orleans traditions. There are strong elements of blues and gospel in the compositions – and in the improvised realizations of the compositions – thus acknowledging a long history of musical genres. At the same time, these elements are treated not as dimensions in a sonic museum, but as explorations of the traditions in a contemporary moment. One key feature is the rather sparse use of the piano on many of the tracks. Austad plays melodies and improvises and at long stretches hardly uses his left hand. This gives air to the sound, and also brings the interaction between the pianist's right hand and the bass playing of Singelton into focus. A clear example is "724 Blues" which is first and foremost about melody and where chordal playing primarily is as background for the bass solo. Similar strategies are explored on "Turnaround" and also: George Harrison's "Something." This song may come as a bit of a surprise track given the New Orleans context, but it is given a gospel-tinge and soft whispers in the drums and the melodic piano establishes connections to the other compositions despite coming from a different tradition.

On "Esplanade Drive," I hear an exploration of colors, where the instruments explore the

atmosphere almost like movement through a city. Whereas on "Basin Street Blues" the musicians give themselves time and let the improvisations extend, and from this long time stretch something new arises in the midst of this classic. "Soul of a Twain" is more gospel than blues, and here too the space between the notes is almost as noticeable as the sounds played. "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" combines gospel with a march-feeling, inspired by elements from New Orleans funerals, and thus become a jubilee of pianistic melodicism. And then, there is "That Feeling," which may very well be a key composition on this album. It comes out of nothing, as if the volume is turned up in the midst of an improvisation, and thus illustrates what the whole album is about: trying to capture that feeling that, for these musicians, is New Orleans. I have yet to visit New Orleans, but listening to Eivind Austad and his fellow musicians, I get a glimpse that I may have an idea what it means to miss that city. Not that the album is nostalgic; rather it enters into a dialogue with the sonic history of a city, digging into a long musical history, thus at one and the same time preserving tradition and history, and showing how such traditions are reinvented.

Erik Steinskog, March 2020