

ACT

Nguyễn Lê

Guests:

Youn Sun Nah
 Dhafer Youssef, David Linx
 David Binney, Chris Speed
 Prabhu Edouard, Karim Ziad
 and others

Songs Of Freedom
ACT 9506-2

German Release Date: March 25, 2011



The French-Vietnamese guitarist Nguyễn Lê proves, like no other musician, that globalisation doesn't always have to mean cultural homogenisation but that it can also create something new with its own quality. Since he became the first exclusive ACT artist in 1993, after "Jazzpana", he has developed, fully in the sense of the equally cosmopolitan thinking label founder Siggi Loch, to become a great 'music ethnologist' in jazz. There is hardly any music region with its styles, characteristics and exceptional representatives which has not awakened his interest and which he hasn't transformed into one of his ever self-enclosed cultural puzzles. Particularly on the four ACT albums released so far with the enchanting singer Huong Thanh, he has dedicated himself to Vietnamese stories as well as Far Eastern sounds ("Saiyuki", ACT 9483-2) and the Maghreb ("Maghreb & Friends", ACT 9261-2) and, in the pioneering Trio E_L_B with Peter Erskine and Michel Benita, he reinterpreted the classic trio format in jazz.

His probably most successful 'field research', celebrated by all the critics, was his 2002 album "Purple - Celebrating Jimi Hendrix" (ACT 9410-2) which approached the American guitar myth, admired by him for many years, from a universal jazz perspective. Lê's new project, possibly his most ambitious to date, continues with, "this work about a part of Afro American culture", as he described the pioneering Hendrix homage. "Songs of Freedom" (ACT 9506-2) is, in his words, "A tribute to the musicians who, in the seventies, established pop culture with their mythical songs. So mythical that they now belong to everyone on this planet and so global that they have become world music in the sense of a music which the world listens to."

Nguyễn Lê takes the title of his latest album from one of his favourite songs of freedom: Bob Marley's "Redemption Song" sits alongside hits from Led Zeppelin, Janis Joplin, Stevie Wonder, Eric Clapton and the Beatles, whose "Eleanor Rigby" and "Come Together" frame the album - credit where credit's due, these artists wrote some of the finest songs in recent memory. But Lê takes the liberty to unearth these icons of pop and rock history from their dust (or gold) covered depths and brings them to the present day and to the global village, with the help of his own formidable musical prowess as well as many exceptional guests from all over the world who provide support in his band.

Together with Lê, Illya Amar (marimba, vibraphone and electronics), Linley Marthe (electric bass) and Stéphane Galland (drums) form the dynamic basic framework of these transformations, continually pushing forwards rhythmically but remaining easy going and light. The singers Youn Sun Nah, Dhafer Youssef, David Linx, Ousman Danedjo, Himiko Paganotti, Julia Sarr and the percussionists Karim Ziad, Stéphane and Prabhu Edouard, Hamid El Kasri and Keyvan Chemirani and the saxophonists David Binney and Chris Speed give each song their own personal stamp. Lê brilliantly arranges these musicians, placing them in suitable yet always surprising situations. On several occasions he converses with his guests, so to speak, with brief self-composed intros which offer the perfect introduction.

As a result, this isn't an album featuring standard cover versions. Instead, familiar melodies are introduced with great respect to pulsating new sound streams from all over the world. "Music is like a bird. Once it has been released it will fly in any sky. The earth becomes rounder and rounder and invites all cultures to an exchange and to immerse themselves in one another. This leads to the freedom to make these songs one's own: to still lovingly play the original melodies yet with the boldness of our own arrangements which celebrate the realm of imaginative power and fantasy," says Nguyễn Lê.

These poetic words are not too far-fetched, and this is undoubtedly proven on the album. Here we can hear how the soul of Stevie Wonder's "I Wish" immerses totally harmoniously in Caribbean-Asiatic sound worlds, and how Janis Joplin's "Mercedes Benz" rolls along not only Californian but also Indian, Japanese and French paths. Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love" is also transformed in to a rousing whirlwind, with the band being led by the eternally and indisputably precise Youn Sun Nah who is here surprisingly rocky and irresistibly intense.



Nguyễn Lê



Photo by Laurent Edeline

“Come Together” is therefore not simply the last track of the album, but represents what the album is about. With these 15 songs of freedom, Nguyễn Lê impressively brings together a wide and previously unheard range of individuals and sounds from various different origins - West merges with East, North with South, great vocals with instrumental virtuosity and the melodic legacy of the past with the sound of the future.

The CD: Songs Of Freedom – Nguyễn Lê – ACT 9506-2 - LC 07644

Line Up:

Nguyễn Lê / guitars, computer
Illya Amar / vibraphone, marimba, electronics
Linley Marthe / electric bass & vocals
Stéphane Galland / drums

Guests: Youn Sun Nah, Dhafer Youssef, David Linx, Ousman Danedjo, Julia Sarr, Himiko Paganotti, David Binney, Chris Speed, Prabhu Edouard, Stéphane Edouard, Karim Ziad, Guo Gan, Hamid El Kasri, Keyvan Chemirani

Titel:

01 Eleanor Rigby	09 Move Over
02 I Wish	10 Whole Lotta Love
03 Ben Zeppelin	11 Redemption Song
04 Black Dog	12 Sunshine of your Love
05 Pastime Paradise	13 In A Gadda da Vida
06 Uncle Ho's Benz	14 Topkapi
07 Mercedes Benz	15 Come Together
08 Over The Rainforest	

Produced, arranged, recorded & mixed by Nguyễn Lê at Louxor studios, Paris Barbès, July to October 2010.
Executive Producer: Siggı Loch. Live tracks recorded at studios 7e ciel, Issy les Moulineaux, August 2010 by Jean Maurice Hayano

ACT - The Art in Music: Cover art by Raymond Pettibon, 2010

For the rock side of Nguyễn Lê also check out: “Purple - celebrating Jimi Hendrix” (ACT 9410-2)

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