

# ABOUT SHARE

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SHARE...

Because I deeply felt during the recording of the album a sharing of music where everyone contributed from their own imaginary world and personal history. I have always liked the idea of being able to write music while thinking ahead and keeping in mind those who will perform it (Duke Ellington was a master at this), along with the staging it implies. As soon as we started playing the pieces that make up the repertoire of the album, the way that Matt, Otis, Eric, Mark and Tom succeeded in being totally themselves while staying close to what I meant by those themes went way beyond anything I expected! All with the simplicity that characterises the greatest improvisers.

In proposing to share this experience with musicians from across the Atlantic, I also like the idea of unity, a sort of universality brought about by a common language that allows us to get beyond the cultural divides that we are sometimes thought to be tied to or subjected to, whereas our first love is often the need to be free. Baptiste Trotignon

If there's one type of music that allows people who speak different languages to come together to converse and create, it's jazz. Jazz is a world language which, over the years, has helped musicians hailing from across the globe to share experiences without needing to resort to words. Baptiste Trotignon explores this phenomenon on *SHARE*, the title of his latest album, on which he plays a central role alongside some of the most creative jazz players on the American scene. Recorded in one of the best studios in New York, this new work by the French pianist is the perfect example of the deep bond that can develop between musicians who understand one another even though they're virtually strangers, and the wonderful music they create when they share the same values, underpinned by the sort of exchanges that make for great jazz performances.

After making a decisive contribution to several projects, including the group led by saxophonist Stefano Di Battista in which he played the Hammond organ, the «Flower Power» trio with Aldo Romano, or his «two man quartet» featuring David El-Malek, with whom he has released albums on the Naïve label, Trotignon has returned to the scene with an album that spells out his talent as a pianist and the quality of his imaginative melodic skills.

As Trotignon had not performed in a trio since the acclaimed *SIGHTSEEING*, recorded shortly before he received the Grand Prize at the 2002 Martial Solal International Jazz-Piano Competition, *SHARE* offered him a golden opportunity to renew his ties with a musical format that's widely considered to be ideal for pianists. And what a trio it is! Bass player Matt Penman, a New Zealander living in cosmopolitan New York since 1995 and widely praised for his contribution to the SFJazz Collective featuring John Scofield and Ari Hoenig, plays the role that we've come to expect of him; vigorous and precise, he carries the trio without a single hitch. Otis Brown III (a favourite accomplice of the talented Joe Lovano) and Eric Harland (a frequent pick of McCoy Tyner and Charles Lloyd, and a professional acquaintance of Baptiste through Di Battista), who alternate depending on the tracks, are among the best of a new generation of drummers who have reinvented the drum beat, infusing performances with a myriad of colours while mastering the most sophisticated of metrics with perfect agility. Supported by partners like these (who are incidentally leaders in their fields), Trotignon has returned to what makes musical triangles so fascinating, the tension between shaping and mastering form, and the dynamics of

collective evasion and emulation, releasing the explosive energy of improvisation in all its splendour, while giving authoritative piano performances that place him among the most gifted players of his generation. As if we didn't know it already.

His talent shines through with so much brilliance that, throughout *SHARE*, Trotignon reveals an innate sense of melody that perfectly matches the intelligent structures underlying his compositions. Each of the eleven tracks featured on this album are intentionally written by Trotignon himself, revealing both the need to forge a repertoire that stimulates soloists and the desire to develop a melodic art form that tends to be neglected by many artists who believe that sophistication always equals abstraction. It would be a mistake to think - because it often escapes the uninitiated ear - that Trotignon's tracks are simple improvised canvases. Under the brilliant surface, which ensures they instantly lodge in our minds, these tracks often include some tough and unusual harmonic sequences and rhythmic interpretations that come together just when sharpness and virtuosity are needed most. In this regard, Trotignon's writing style reveals him as an heir to Duke Ellington in his time or the standards forged by Wayne Shorter, combining a sensitive ear with an ability to meet the demands of the piece being played.

The result is an inspired and inspiring repertoire that really comes into its own when the trio transforms itself into a quartet or quintet thanks to one or other of the two unique voices that Trotignon invited to feature on the album. The talented trumpeter Tom Harrell, whose playing might be compared to a personal synthesis of Freddie Hubbard and Chet Baker, needs no introduction; Harrell and Trotignon had the opportunity to perform as a duet in New York in January 2007, and their performance on *Blue* is a true marvel. Saxophonist Mark Turner, considered by many musicians as one of the great revivalists of the tenor saxophone, has forged an original solo career by turning his back on pre-defined formulas, preferring the sort of harmonious tensions found in his daring yet admirable solo performance on *Flow*. Whether they are performing together on *Dexter*, or separately, these two soloists, whose contrasting temperaments Trotignon personally decided to unite on this album, are here seen at their most sincere and authentic, accepting to play on the pianist's compositions and uplifting its elegant melodies while leaving their own mark during solo performances.

*SHARE* is marked by an incredibly fluid playing style. It reveals Trotignon's deep roots in a jazz culture that is not afraid to take risks and reaches out directly to the public without falling into the trap of playing easy tunes. Again and again on this album you hear the mark of every great pianist in history - a combination of strength and gentleness, of power and sensuality, an awareness of touch and phrasing, wonderfully conveyed by the sound recording produced at the Systems Two studio in Brooklyn. Loyal to the sounds that first appealed to him as a young musician, Trotignon has created one of the landmark albums of his career, successfully bringing into the present the founding elements of jazz - swing, a sense of development, the expressiveness of blues, the fluidity of groove - nourished by his European ear and his knowledge of the classical repertoire, broadly represented on his last two solo albums. *SHARE* is a great contemporary jazz album that has carved out its own niche without abandoning its roots. There's not an ounce of nostalgia here. It's a refreshing album caught up in the motion and whirl of inventiveness of our era. As the leader of this project, a success from one track to the next, Trotignon can legitimately expect to share it with a broad audience, which is when *SHARE* will really come into its own.