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A European in America: an espresso with Julien Hucq

February 25, 2020

A European in America

Julien Hucq has just released "Light Blue", his first record produced in the USA after having recorded six in Europe; we interviewed him

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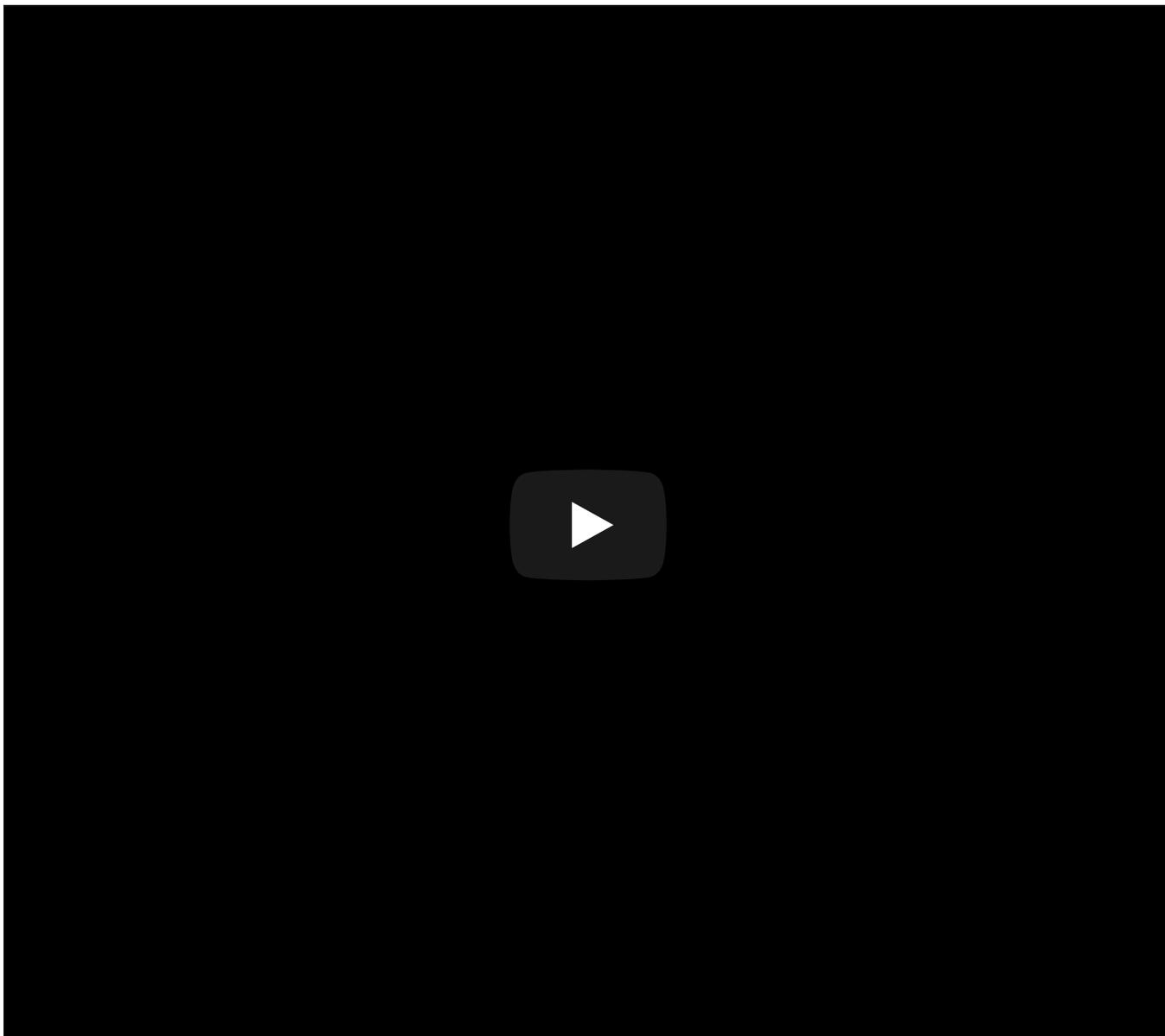
This is your first American production: what are the differences in publishing a record in Europe and in the USA?

Jazz is a truly global art form, so as far as the musicians are concerned, there is no difference in how I would have put together the band. Perhaps the major shift for me has been developing deeper relationships in the U.S. with radio hosts and members of the press as I am, for the first time, vigorously promoting my album to U.S. audiences. I am delighted and grateful that Light Blue has been received with a lot of enthusiasm.

Being originally from Europe, my collaborations for my prior recordings in the EU were exciting experiences as I nurtured my art and learned the process of bringing it to audiences. My fans at European concerts and tours fueled my ambitions to grow as an artist. All my prior albums were self-published.

For this album, I'm fortunate to be surrounded for the first time by two experienced producers (Mickey Bass – Early Bird Records and John Lee – Alleycat Studios) who are guiding me in making smart artistic and business choices. Light Blue debuted in the US on January 1, 2020. We are just beginning to approach the European market. Italy is a country where I would love to develop performing opportunities. I know many great Italian musicians and that the audience vibrates with jazz over there.

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How did you choose the songs to cover and the musicians?

Mickey Bass of Early Bird Records was instrumental in that process. We chose to orient the repertoire toward embracing varying genres of jazz, which he playfully describes as 'something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue'. We also chose to include a repertoire in the lineage of hard bop, which is a trademark of Early Bird Records.

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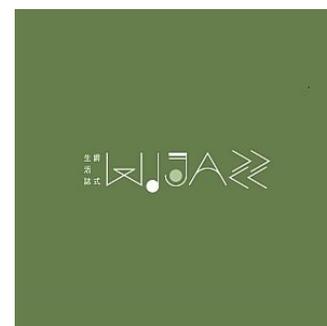
Sadly Claudio Roditi passed away soon after the release of the CD. Is there a memory of him you would like to share with us?

Claudio and I connected in NYC three years ago. He gave me the opportunity to play with him. I started sitting in with his band at numerous occasions before being a part of his group.

He always encouraged me to pursue my path as a performer and composer. Claudio was a creative musician, always composing, and most of all, a fantastic human being, always seeking to bring people together and learn from our various backgrounds and cultures. I will always remember him as a joyful and strong force of life.

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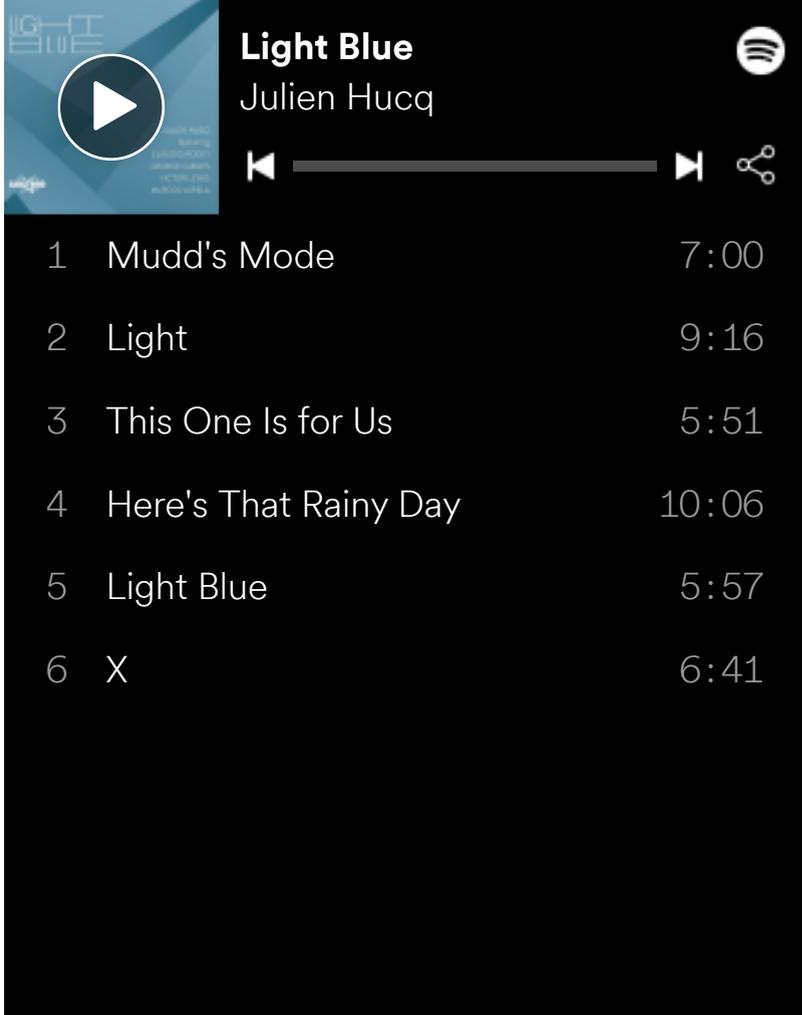
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How do you work on compositions?

I choose a subject or a theme then start envisioning how I would like the composition to sound. I then start writing musical notes at the table. Working with the piano comes at the end of the process. When I compose I often recall Picasso's quote about painting: it's like walking a dog on a leash: you give the direction but the dog guides the walk.

The sound of the record is a mix of hard bop and swing: what is Jazz today in your opinion?

Living in the US has been a great experience for me in terms of deeply understanding the tradition of jazz and its roots: blues, gospel and swing. However, I certainly feel connected to all the flavors and influences jazz incorporates nowadays. This is also why Light Blue has some Brazilian music and Belgian flavors.

From a cultural and historical standpoint, jazz is the African-American musical heritage. From a global perspective, the flexible and inclusive nature of the art form connects with people from all over the world, across races and cultures. Jazz is an expression of joy. Jazz carries a wonderful and rich tradition, from revolt to optimism, it gives us the opportunity and responsibility to communicate a good vibe.

What are your next projects?

We are working on different projects including a CD release concert in NYC, developing performance opportunities in the US and in Europe. I also compose for classical and jazz crossover projects, one in Belgium with a clarinet quartet, and another one in France with a woodwind quintet. Composing and orchestrating is definitely a great source of inspiration and allows me to connect with my European background while developing ways of expression.



A European in America: an espresso with Julien Hucq copyright Jazzespresso 2020.

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