

Fantastic Merlins



A mysterious blend of improvisation and composition brings together visceral power and sparse textures producing sounds that are intriguing, energetic, and positive.

Listening to Fantastic Merlins is like walking down an alley in a film noir: shadowy characters, ambiguous motives, and cliffhanger moments abound. Fantastic Merlins effortlessly weave together the dark and the light, the dangerous and innocent. Their cinematic sound coalesces organically in an exquisite tension, surprising listeners as often as it soothes.

Fantastic Merlins' balance between highly orchestrated passages and improvisational flights of fancy creates a constant process of discovery. It keeps the Fantastic Merlins sound fresh — delighting both listeners and band members themselves. This process produces momentary mysteries, too: discerning the difference between dramatically different instruments can be nearly impossible.

Fantastic Merlins

www.fantasticmerlins.com
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Nathan Hanson

Saxophonist Nathan Hanson has performed with legends such as Dizzy Gillespie, Cecil Taylor, Mark Dresser, and Douglas Ewart, as well as rising stars including Chris Potter, Tony Malaby and Liberty Ellman. He has been called “probing” (Jazziz), “an extraordinary performer, with a beautiful tone and concept” (Cadence), and “unexpectedly tasteful and dignified” (ImproJazz-France).

Daniel Levin

Daniel Levin began playing the cello at age six. He has performed and/or recorded with Billy Bang, Borah Bergman, Tim Berne, Anthony Braxton, Rob Brown, Whit Dickey, Mark Dresser, Joe Morris, Joe McPhee, William Parker, Warren Smith, Ken Vandermark, and many others. Daniel has recorded as a sideman for Clean Feed, EMANEM, Not Two, and RogueART. His records as a leader are on Riti Records, Hat Hut, and Clean Feed. Daniel is the recipient of a 2010 Jerome Foundation Award.

Brian Roessler

Brian Roessler is a bassist, composer, and long-time student of double bass virtuoso François Rabbath. His composition Returning to Silence was chosen as the subject of a master class with Henry Threadgill at the MacPhail Center for Music. Brian has recorded and performed with artists such as Tony Hymas, Didier Petit, Carei Thomas, Dan Navarro, Peter Mayer, Speaking in Tongues, Storyhill, and Spymob.

Peter Hennig

Drummer Peter Hennig is a graduate of McNally Smith College of Music who has studied under Dave King (The Bad Plus). He has performed alongside vocalists Renee Austin, Debbie Duncan, and Sophia Shorai, as well as with the Atlantis Quartet, Greybox, and Charlie Devanna. Peter is the recipient of a 2010 Minnesota Emerging Composer Award.

“A band with vision that is literally part NYC, part Minneapolis, and spiritually part free jazz and part string quartet”

Foxy Digitalis

“Part avant-garde jazz, part chamber music, part boundary-breaking sonic journey.”

Milwaukee Shepherd-Express

“Intensity, freedom and flat-out beauty”

Pulse Magazine

“Desolate themes, vigorous lines and engaging improvisations are intertwined with delicate concentration and a masterful pacing of every section”

Touching Extremes

“Fantastic Merlins make music imbued with one of jazz's greatest strengths: a complex but naturally woven and interdependent improvisational spirit.”

Reveille

“Listeners can't lose with this enjoyably innovative quartet.”

Minnesota Monthly

“Transcending post-modern superficiality to create a convincing stylistic blend.”

Signal to Noise

“The music distills a timeless and dark romanticism, provoking in the listener an abstract nostalgia without object.”

Les Allumés du Jazz

“This is clearly a group effort, with collective improvisation the norm. The results are not chaotic but appear carefully orchestrated with extraordinary blowing.”

Cadence

“The Merlins are adept at steering their sound between quirky and sophisticated, pensive and manic when changing their sonic moods.”

Ink 19

“Often working independently of one another, each player contributes an important voice to the group sound; solo and accompaniment roles are blurred or combined.”

Bass World

“The music that the Fantastic Merlins play is somewhere in that muddy territory between avant-garde jazz and new music.”

Albuquerque Journal

“Played in a very elegant way.”

Le Monde

“A music that defies labels and classifications.”

Culture Jazz

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AJMI, Avignon, France
Artists Quarter, St. Paul, MN
Beaners, Duluth, MN
Big Car Gallery, Indianapolis, IN
Blank Page, Wichita, KS
The Charleston, Chicago, IL
Chatterbox, Lincoln, NE
Clown Lounge, St. Paul, MN
Concrete and Grass Festival, St Paul, MN
Dakota Jazz Club, Minneapolis, MN
Eighth Street Taproom, Lawrence, KS
Elastic, Chicago, IL
Espace Culturel, Angers, France
La Grande Boutique, Langonnet, France
Hinterland, Green Bay, WI
Hotcakes Gallery, Milwaukee, WI
Hot Summer Jazz Festival, St Paul, MN
Hungry Brain, Chicago, IL
Kacico West, Kansas City, MO
Kerrytown Concert House, Ann Arbor, MI
Lemp Neighborhood Arts Center, St Louis, MO
Luna, De Pere, WI
Mexicains Sans Frontieres, Grand Rapids, MI
Minglewood, Rockford, IL
Mother Fools, Madison, WI
The Outpost, Albuquerque, NM
Pannonica, Nantes, France
Penn Ar Jazz, Brest, France
Sons d'Hiver Festival, Paris, France
Southern Theater, Minneapolis, MN
Studio de l'Ermitage, Paris, France
Studio Z, St. Paul, MN
Theatre La Passerelle, St. Brieuc, France
Twin Cities Jazz Festival, MN
The Washington, Burlington, IA

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