

Unsung Hero: “Blue Lou” Marini

Saxophones, Flutes, Clarinet, Arranger, Composer, Educator, Producer

“Lou has a lot to say, and all should listen.”

—Bob Hensley, L.A. review

Often referred to as an “unsung jazz hero,” platinum recording artist, Lou Marini, Jr. is the seasoned soul and adept multi-instrumentalist, arranger, composer, educator, and producer credited with inspiring the origins of a fan-following cult across multiple genres of music.

Making a name for himself as a sideman in various high profile groups, any top New York jazz musician will tell you he’s “one of the absolute best jazz musicians.” The New York based Marini is famed for his chameleon-like adaptability to imagine and perform inventive ideas in jazz, rock, blues and classical music. Describing Lou’s performances, the *New York Times* said, “(he’s) the focal point of the group... (who) gives the band most of its colors and shadings, and provides it with a strongly melodic lead voice.”

Five time Grammy Award winning arranger / composer Bob Belden had this to say about one of the time-honored contributions from Lou Marini, Jr., “This composition and arrangement reflects Lou’s ability to create exciting, new music that embraces rock and the most advanced ideas of jazz music.” The statement helps illustrate Marini’s ability to inspire and traverse multiple music disciplines.

Highly Sought Sideman

Popular since the early 1970s, Lou Marini, Jr. continues to be one of the most sought-after sidemen and session musicians on the New York scene. Due in part to his incredible skill and talent of the highest calibre, Marini masters many styles and instruments. He is accomplished on soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxes, piccolo, flute, alto flute, bass flute and clarinet.

The ever-present influence of Lou Marini, Jr. is all around you. Jingles, television, radio and concerts all reflect the irresistible, innovative sounds of this veteran performer who electrifies audiences internationally. He truly is one of the industry’s most prolific luminaries who demonstrates a tireless commitment to his craft.

Band Membership

Lou Marini, Jr. is best known as a member of several distinguished bands: Woody Herman Orchestra, Doc Severinson, Blood, Sweat and Tears, The Band, Levon Helm & the RCO All-Stars, Dr. John, Frank Zappa, Saturday Night Live (SNL) Band, The Blues Brothers, Maureen McGovern, Lew Soloff Quintet, BlueBeck with Joe Beck, Eric Clapton, Red House, and the Magic City Jazz Orchestra. He has toured four times each with James Taylor’s Band of Legends and the John Tropea Band. A true blue lover of big bands, Lou has had the honor of performing with some of his childhood idols such as Thad Jones-Mel Lewis and the Buddy Rich Band, the latter with whom he also arranged.

Is it any wonder Marini’s arrangements and compositions display influences from the work of his heros? Gil Evans, Bob Brookmeyer, Thad Jones, Don Ellis, along with rock, pop and avant-garde techniques can be heard in his music. His unusual, off-the-wall notions, for example, are featured in his composition “Hip Pickles,” a tune whose title doubles as the abstract name of his publishing company.

Album Recordings + Performances

The high profile cultural icon, Blue Lou Marini has recorded on numerous albums, many of which went platinum. Celebrities with whom his “Blueness,” as Lou is also known, has recorded with include Aretha Franklin, Tony Bennett, The Rolling Stones, Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross, Aerosmith, Maureen McGovern, Billy Joel, B.B. King, Luther Vandross, Lou Reed, Brecker Brothers, Dr. John, Donald Fagan, Eddie Palmieri, Jimmy Buffet, Frank Zappa, John Tropea, and Steely Dan. Contrasting, yet notable icons he has also performed with include Eric Clapton Smokey Robinson, Jose Carreras, Lou Rawls, The Supremes, Dr. John, Four Tops, Sting, and Tina Turner.

Saturday Night Live and The Blues Brothers

In fact, it is Marini's seven year association as an original SNL band member that led to his role as "Blue Lou" in John Belushi and Dan Akroyd's cult classic movie, "The Blues Brothers." To this day, the remarkable popularity of the Blues Brothers Band is kept alive. Lou and the other band members tour worldwide, giving live concerts to packed houses and hundreds of thousands screaming fans.

No stranger to film, Lou Marini enjoys a formidable roster of success in this arena, too. His character as a band member and the saxophone soloist, who performs with his sax on the counter of a diner as Aretha Franklin sings "Think" in "The Blues Brothers" movie, remains throughout the sequel "Blue Brothers 2000." Dubbed 'Blue Lou' by Dan Akroyd, he is also well-recognized for his saxophone solos at the open and close of SNL episodes, and as the golden pharaoh who plays a solo instrumental hit for comedian Steve Martin's "King Tut" sketch on a 1978 episode.

Screen Undertakings

Different film-related projects Marini has lent his talents to are "Nightlife," hosted by comedian David Brenner (saxophone soloist for Billy Preston's band), numerous appearances on the "David Letterman Show," the "Grammy Awards," "Tony Awards," "James Taylor's Musicare's Man of the Year Special," "Kennedy Center Honors," the soundtrack of Martin Scorsese's "The Last Waltz," "Sesame Street," countless network television specials (i.e. Aretha Franklin's duet special, all-star band for President-Elect Obama on HBO's 'We Are One,' an AIDS special featuring Dionne Warwick and Elton John). Likewise, Lou's genius is featured in "The Ref," "The Wiz," "Bright Lights Big City," "Burning Bed," "Bye Bye Birdie," "Turner & Hooch," "Mixed Nuts," and most recently a "Family Thing," starring Robert Duvall and James Earl Jones.

About a decade prior to SNL, Marini's sound was beginning to form at the University of North Texas (UNT). A member of the famed One O'Clock Lab Band, Lou flushed out his musical influences in fresh, exciting ways to create a sound that set him apart from his peers.

New Project

Today, Blue Lou's singular, expressive voice achieves virtuosity in his first collaborative recording with Misha Segal titled "**The Blue Lou & Misha Project - Highly Classified.**" His third album as a leader, Marini defines a cutting-edge, urban cool jazz vibe that revolutionizes the soundscape with edgy concepts and cliché-free tones. The celebrated saxophone wizard takes listeners on an ultra-original, sonic adventure showcasing horn solos. Masterful compositions and arrangements combine with smooth rap rhythms and hints of humor. Overall, this unconventional, yet accessible, collection transports the listener at warp speed into the future, fusing contemporary jazz, fusion, rock, straight-ahead jazz, rap and hip hop. Other albums featuring Lou are "**Chihuahua Boogie**" (2010), "**Lou's Blues**" (2001), and "**Soul Serenade**" (1992). Future releases include a Lynda Carter album, and a father-son project.

Education - Awards - Family

Born May 13, 1945 in Charleston, S.C. and raised in Ohio, making music is in the roots of the Marini family tree. At Fairless High School where Blue Lou attended, his father Lou Marini, Sr. directed his high school band and composed the alma mater. Each year the school bestows the Lou Marini Award in honor of his father. In 2010 the Marini's were honored by the school, when they received the 'Distinguished Fairless Falcon Award' given to Blue Lou and his late father. Marini, Jr. carries on the tradition of education previously started by his father. He has arranged for Stan Kenton, and been on the faculties of both the Stan Kenton Camps and National Stage Band camps. Currently, he is an active clinician with high school and university jazz bands, and serves as Musical Director of the Brianza. Blues Festival in Monza, Italy.

Married to his beautiful Spanish bride, Carmen, Blue Lou is a long time resident of Manhattan's Upper West Side where he continues his life-long pursuit of musical excellence. Known as "Double-Dad" by his granddaughter Alaina, Blue Lou's son performed with him in Tuscany during the summer of 2010. Dubbed 'Louie Tre' (Italian style), Lou's son carries on the music roots as a vocalist in the Dallas area.

Public Relations Contact:

Dawn DeBlaze, 314.766.JAZZ



Quotes: Lou Marini

“The focal point of the group is Lou Marini...he gives the band most of its colors and shadings, and provides it with a strongly melodic lead voice...Marini moves through these various settings with chameleon-like adaptability, playing with a strong, full projection and rich perceptive shading in whatever style he happens to find himself.”
- **John Simon, New York Times**

“If we had known that you actually went to high school, Jake and I might not have let you join the band. Thankfully, I’m only finding out now because your spirit, talent and technical abilities provided immense contributions to the recordings and films.”
- **Dan Aykroyd (aka Elwood Blues), Actor-Comedian-Musician-Screenwriter**

“(Lou Marini) is one of the most sought-after studio musicians in New York, and a concert artist and composer. I’ve been blessed to record with our ‘Blue Lou’ for the past 30 years and to perform whenever our two schedule happily collide.”
- **Maureen McGovern, Vocalist - Actress - Songwriter**

“One of the blessings of this life in music has been the companionship of so many fine players (artists really). We are fellow travelers on the endless road and Lou has been the vagabond prince of this footloose community, a true friend and above all, a lover of music; anywhere, everywhere, all the time. His enthusiasm and good will shine through the most dismal of days and he turns work into pleasure. Lou digs life and is rewarded in turn...” - **James Taylor, Singer-Songwriter**

“The hipness level goes up the minute he walks in the room and it goes through the roof whenever he plays (ask him to do ‘The Marini Blues Brothers Strutt’ and you’ll see what I mean). Lou Marini is quite simply the best!”
- **Maureen McGovern, Vocalist - Actress - Songwriter**

“I don’t think I’ve ever enjoyed playing with anyone more than Lou Marini, whether we’re performing his music, playing in a section in the studios, or on concert stages around the world...what a magnificent gene pool!”
- **Alan “Mr. Fabulous” Rubin, Musician (trumpet, flugelhorn, piccolo) - Actor**

“You (Louis E. Marini, Jr.) are indeed a rare individual. You possess unique and wonderful gifts for many things, not the least of which is music and, of course, your genuine warmth and charm.” - **Ray Reach, Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame**

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Lou Marini

Stars Aligned

It took more than 20 years for saxophonist Lou Marini's new Blujazz CD, *Starmaker*, to see the light of day. Recorded in 1990 and named after a 1937 science fiction novel by Olaf Stapledon, the album features nine original tracks performed by some of Marini's best friends and associates. The album's release was sidetracked due to Marini's lack of success in finding a proper label for it, not to mention some personal-life distractions that prevented him from pursuing it further. More than two decades later, a bit of serendipity led to his renewed interest in the long-shelved but never-abandoned project, which was engineered by world-class producer Jay Messina.

"About a year-and-a-half ago, I saw Jay on a recording date, and he said, 'Where are you storing that, and have you transferred it to digital yet?'" Marini recalled while in Chicago this summer during a tour with James Taylor's band. "He said, 'Man, you've got to transfer that or you could lose it.' When I finally heard it digitally, it sounded so great. Jay said I was crazy not to put this out." Blujazz released the CD this summer, effectively transporting listeners, and Marini, simultaneously back in time and firmly into the present.

In his long career as a saxophonist and woodwind doubler, Marini, 67, is known for creating accessible music that's deeply rooted in his straight-ahead jazz background. He has been in high demand as a performer and clinician since graduating from North Texas State University, where he was in the One O'Clock Lab Band—though he claims he didn't even realize he had a career until he was in his 40s.

An ace soloist, expert arranger and valued member of numerous ensembles over the decades, he has worked with top artists across multiple genres—from Woody Herman, Lew Soloff and Frank Zappa to Blood, Sweat & Tears, the "Saturday Night Live" Band, the Blues Brothers Band and a long list of high-profile pop, rock and r&b artists. He's even served as musical director of the Brianza Blues Festival in Monza, Italy, and gigs frequently in a band led by actress and singer Linda Carter (of TV's "Wonder Woman" fame). Thanks to his professionalism, his laid-back personal style and his ability to flat-out wail in any musical situation, everybody loves "Blue Lou" (a nickname bestowed upon him by comedic actor and blues aficionado Dan Akroyd).

Starmaker features the trumpet playing of Alan Rubin, a.k.a. "Mr. Fabulous," a friend of Marini's who passed away last year. "I had asked Alan to be in the booth as sort of my co-



BY ANDREW LEFLEY

producer on the session," Marini said. "We were talking with Jay about something technical, and suddenly Alan says, 'Hey, check out what they're playing.' The guys had gotten into creating this beautiful soundscape. So that's the way the album starts off, and it ends in a similar way. That's one thing I like about this CD: There's so much free playing from everybody."

The CD contains funk, blues, jazz and ambient elements, with plenty of live-in-the-studio group interplay. It even features a couple of vocal performances from Marini. "I'm singing a lot better now," Marini said, noting that he's come a long way as a vocalist since recording *Starmaker*. "The reason is, my wife is Spanish, and I know a lot of musicians there. For the past three years I've been doing a lot of work with a Spanish blues quartet called Red House. When I go and visit my wife's family in Madrid, we've been working, and I'm singing five or six of my tunes with them. It's a different kind of singing than what's on the CD."

When it comes to playing his horns, Marini is all about articulating complete ideas and expressing them in a clear manner. "If I'm just playing the melody, I want to play the melody so that it feels like it's the first time you play it," said Marini, whose long gray hair stands in striking contrast to the never-gonna-grow-up twinkle in his eyes. "Even if you get into something that's very abstract, I want to have that abstract playing come from a clear feeling."

Marini, who grew up as the son of a band director in Navarre, Ohio, has always been good at maintaining a high level of energy onstage. "I've had a lot of fun, and I've spent my life with great musicians since the time I was a kid," he said. "I admire the guys who are still burning just the way they were when they were kids. In a lot of ways I burn harder now because I know that I'm on the tail end of that. Every time you play, you've got to remind yourself: Who knows how many more chances you're gonna get?"

—Ed Enright

metallic noise from Lonberg-Holm's cello and sounds so outrageous that it can only be the result of good-natured tomfoolery. Plus, it leads to the tune's second great bass clarinet solo.

Lonberg-Holm switches to tenor guitar on several tracks, lending something of a progressive-rock lilt to the music, which Anton Hatwich (bass) and Frank Rosaly (drums) drive along, especially in "Later News." He uses looping effects to shape "Simpler Days," a 10-minute ballad that follows the equally pensive "Lazy Day." Some of the wildest moments on *Gather* come from one of the two works penned by other band members. Jackson's "Roses" is full of brief sketches, pregnant pauses and a section where all six musicians blow trumpets or cornets. Even though Lonberg-Holm didn't write it, the work bears his compositional influence, which features a great sense of adventure.

The cellist reveals yet another facet of his style with *Seval*, which includes performers from Sweden's new music/improvising scene. For the group's sophomore album, Lonberg-Holm penned all eight selections, including clever lyrics. The chamber-like lineup includes cello, guitar, trumpet, bass and the soprano vocals of Sofia Jernberg. Arrangements are often spare and delicate with instruments echoing Jernberg's crisp enunciations perhaps a little too closely. "Revolution Song" breaks free, though, when the vocalist imitates saxophone shrieks and blends in with her comrades' swelling sound.

MIKE SHANLEY

HAROLD MABERN

MR. LUCKY: A TRIBUTE TO SAMMY DAVIS JR. (HighNote)



Brisk, buoyant and gimmick-free, this straight-ahead quartet date is as unpretentiously satisfying as that first swig of cold beer after a hard day's work. In the liner notes to *Mr. Lucky*, pianist Harold Mabern proclaims Sammy Davis Jr. to be "the greatest performer ever," and this beaming tribute brims with the innocent insouciance of that Rat Pack era of the 1950s and '60s, when Davis palled around Vegas with Sinatra and Dean Martin and Mabern, now 76, was just entering adulthood.

The lead soloists here, Mabern and tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander, are both master craftsmen of underrated artistry, their stylistic conservatism camouflaging their creative refinement of the

blues and hard-bop idioms. Joined by their likeminded and frequent cohorts in the rhythm section—drummer Joe Farnsworth and bassist John Webber—on a project dear to Mabern's heart, they set their intuitions on high alert and allow their expertise and shared musical experience to hone their ensemble interplay. As a result, precious few records swing so efficiently and reliably as *Mr. Lucky*.

Most of the material here is not automatically associated with Davis, who was more of an all-around entertainer than a musician. But on the relatively iconic "I've Gotta Be Me," both Mabern and Farnsworth burst from the gate with joyous energy, while Alexander gradually builds the sort of gusto implied by the song's credo over the course of three solos. Mabern is also ecstatic—his right hand trilling, flecks of New Orleans stride spangled on his Memphis funk-soul-blues-bop amalgam—on "As Long as She Needs Me" and the finger-snapping title track. Sans Alexander, he lets the ballad breathe on "What Kind of Fool Am I?," a somber interlude that reminds us how segregation and accusations of being a racial sellout besmirched some of the luster of Davis' celebrity. But as the album title implies, Mabern prefers to honor his hero with music that puts the wind in your hair and tempts you to engage in a little soft-shoe celebration. **BRITT ROBSON**

LOU MARINI

STARMAKER (Blujazz)



Lou Marini's discography as a leader is relatively puny—*Starmaker* is only his fourth proper solo release in a career that stretches back some four-plus decades, and it was recorded in 1990, unreleased until now and actually predates his other albums. Not that the saxophonist has kicked back through the years; he's kept busy serving as a sideman for a long list of headliners running the gamut from Blood, Sweat & Tears to Frank Zappa, Levon Helm, James Taylor, the Saturday Night Live Band and, most famously, the Blues Brothers.

At the time he made *Starmaker*, Marini could easily have capitalized on his rock and pop associations. But he had a specific concept in mind—the album is inspired by Olaf Stapledon's sci-fi novel of the same title—so Marini handpicked a cast of ace player's players, among them pianist Gil Goldstein, bassist Bob Cranshaw, drummers Danny Gottlieb and Chris Parker

and a bevy of guitarists, keyboardists and horn men, to flesh out his concept.

The music is often appropriately cinematic and ambitious. The opening title track is a slow builder, tentative synth and percussion noodling giving way to the first of many brash Marini solos. When the saxophonist retreats midway to give the floor to Goldstein and keyboardist Robbie Kondor, the piece becomes wide-screen, announcing that nothing here will remain static for long. "Civilization Blues" runs on solid funk and Marini's more-soulful-than-expected, Mose Allison-like lead vocal. And on the epic "In My Dreams," guitarist Jeff Mironov, Cranshaw, Gottlieb and Marini lock into a sturdy groove that disintegrates deliberately as it fades, leaving shards in its wake. What all of this has to do with its 1937 source material is never quite spelled out, but the tribute stands on its own admirably enough. **JEFF TAMARKIN**

BILL McHENRY

LA PEUR DU VIDE (Sunnyside)



La Peur Du Vide sits uneasily between straight-ahead and free jazz, occasionally tipping to one side or the other. It's familiar ground for tenor saxophonist Bill McHenry—even more so for his quartet (pianist Orrin Evans, bassist Eric Revis and drummer Andrew Cyrille). By and large they handle this terrain superbly, solidifying the album's aesthetic with their personalities and a deep sense of tradition.

Sometimes that tradition is overt. "In Sight" is a straight cooker with a bop-pish head and deadly swing. Elsewhere, the band stretches out but keeps a foot in blues harmony. Though much of "Recognition" comprises freeform, softly stated interplay between McHenry, Revis and Cyrille, McHenry maintains edgy tonality that solidifies into dark spiritual chords when Evans rejoins him to conclude the piece.

Four of the six tunes pay homage to McHenry's favorite musicians, further unifying the program. "Today" was inspired by Stevie Wonder, whose style reverberates throughout McHenry's two-octave melody and in the soul that Evans and Revis place behind that melody. "Siglo XX," ostensibly a joint tribute to Woody Shaw and Paul Robeson, instead evokes Andrew Hill in its oblong structure and Evans' lustrous, dissonant voicings; McHenry even suggests frequent Hill col-



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Lou Marini: *Starmaker* (2012)

By [HRAYR ATTARIAN](#), Published: October 13, 2012

Lou Marini's *Starmaker* is a reflection of the veteran reedman's professional life, with eight originals ranging from jazz, to blues and other related genres. Known by the moniker "Blue Lou," Marini has starred in the classic "The Blues Brothers" and has played with such diverse ensembles as [Woody Herman's](#) orchestra, Blood, Sweat and Tears, guitarist/composer [Frank Zappa](#), trumpeter [Lew Soloff](#) and singer/songwriter [James Taylor](#).



Raw emotionality and effervescent zest permeate all of the tunes as Marini alternates blowing all three of his saxophones with soulful vocals. Clocking at over eleven minutes, the R& B of "In My Dreams" contrasts Marini's gritty alto, full of satisfying vibrato, with his smooth voice. Jeff Mironov's blistering guitar enhances the urbane mood. True to his nickname, Marini blows a wailing solo on the gutbucket "Civilization Blues," against the backdrop of a full horn section and heavy percussion.

The funky "Mr. Slinky" sheds the spotlight on Marini's spontaneous creativity. His intricate and meandering soprano takes an exhilarating round-trip ride to the main theme. [Gil Goldstein's](#) complex piano arpeggios enhance the tune's jazz roots, while Robbie Kondor's subtle synthesizer gently hints at more electronic styles.

Fusion sensibilities also abound on the title track. Sparse sax notes and carefully placed percussive beats set a futuristic ambience, as Marini's evocative tenor lets loose a lilting melody that echoes against the mellifluous harmonies of the rhythm section. On "Jerusalem," on the other hand, Marini's piercing and agile tone glides over keyboardist Leon Pendarvis' vaguely bluesy vamps, spicing up the piece with Middle Eastern motives.

The remainder of the album includes the Afro-Cuban "A Slash 'a Mango," featuring George Wadenius' deep-rocking guitar and Francisco Centeno's angular bass, a gospel-esque "Mom and Dad," and a shorter reprise of "Starmaker."

Although short on improvisational vigor and lacking thematic unity in the traditional sense of the word, this rollicking disc is an engaging journey through a versatile musician's career. The

enjoyment of its exuberant spirit grows with each spin.

Track Listing: Starmaker; Mr. Slinky; Civilization Blues; In My Dreams; Slash 'A Mango; Jerusalem; Mom And Dad; Starmaker (reprise).

Personnel: Lou Marini: saxophones, vocals; Danny Gottlieb: drums; Chris Parker: drums; Manolo Bandrena: percussion; Sammy Figueroa: percussion; Bob Cranshaw: bass; Tom Barney: bass; Francisco Centeno: bass; Jeff Mironov: guitar; George Wadenius: guitar; Gil Golstein: piano; Robbie Kondor: synthesizer; Leon Pendarvis: synthesizer; Alan Rubin: trumpet; Birch Johnson: trombone; Lawrence Feldman: alto sax; Tommy McDonnell: background vocals; Birch Johnson: background vocals.

Record Label: [Blujazz Productions](#) | Style: [Straight-ahead/Mainstream](#)

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Jazz For A Saturday Night #50: Lou Marini



Lou Marini Jr. was born May 13, 1945. According to his biography appearing on [Wikipedia](#), he attended Fairless High School in Navarre, Ohio, where his father (Lou Sr.) was the band director. After he graduated from high school, Lou Jr. attended the University of North Texas where he performed in the One O'Clock Lab Band.

After college, Lou Jr. became a professional musician, most notably with the rock group Blood, Sweat And Tears, the Saturday Night Live house band, and The Blues Brothers Band. He appeared in both Blues Brothers movies, playing the character "Blue Lou".

Besides the aforementioned groups, Marini has appeared with Eric Clapton, Joe Beck, the Woody Herman Orchestra, Doc Severinson, Frank Zappa, Dr. John, Steely Dan, Maureen McGovern, and toured four times with James Taylor's Band Of Legends.

Besides being a multi-instrumentalist, Marini is a skilled arranger, composer, educator and producer. His discography consists of a large number of projects spanning a number of musical genres including jazz, rock, blues and classical.

The Lou Marini album I want to discuss this time around is his latest, the just-released jazz CD "Starmaker".

Normally at this point I list the other musicians involved, the sidemen if you will. The problem is, Marini is assisted on this one by no fewer than 17 fellow musicians. Listing that many people and their roles would take almost as long as actually talking about the music, so I'm going to experiment this time with listing the personnel for each track as we go along. I haven't ever done that before, and I may never do it again. So we'll see what happens. 📄 📱 🗣️

"Starmaker" brings us eight songs, all Marini originals. The title track is up first, and I have to say that, to the best of my memory, this is the first song I have heard, jazz or otherwise, that was inspired by a science fiction novel. The author of that book, [Olaf Stapledon](#), is not widely known these days because he died in 1950. However, Stapledon's 1937 novel, "Star Maker", is still considered a classic of the genre.

"Starmaker" the song is a very beautiful piece of music. It starts *very quietly* with a bit of music that Marini had the engineers record while the rhythm section was basically killing time and unaware they were being recorded.

This opening section is very soft and airy, and when Marini comes in with his tenor you might expect it to bring things back to earth but it doesn't.

A couple of minutes into "Starmaker" the opening seems to, in Marini's words, vaporize, and we are left with a nicely melodic piece of music that is a delight to listen to. That is a good thing, because this is a long song, running a bit over ten minutes.

"Starmaker" features Marini (possibly changing from tenor sax to alto and then back to tenor, if my ears aren't playing tricks on me), drummer Danny Gottlieb, pianist Gil Goldstein, percussionist Manolo Bandrena, Robbie Kondor on the synthesizer, and Bob Crenshaw on bass.

The next track is called "Mr. Slinky". Marini describes this as "6/4 funk and very difficult" to play. It is basically almost eight minutes of variations on the opening three phrases. This is a fairly bold move, and even though the concept may sound boring, the execution is anything but, especially when pianist Gil Goldstein gets his turn in the limelight. I will say "Mr. Slinky" does have a unique sound, quite unlike any song I have heard before. However, neither bold nor different mean it's bad.

Besides Marini, "Mr. Slinky" features Goldstein on piano, Bob Crenshaw on bass, Jeff Mironov on guitar, Manolo Bandrena on percussion, and Danny Gottlieb on drums.

Track three is in the style of great, old-fashioned blues. The title, conveniently enough, is "Civilization Blues". Besides blowing his sax, we get a big dose of Marini's vocal skills on this one, featuring words written by the ancient Chinese philosopher, Lao Tzu.

Thus on one album we have possibly the first-ever jazz song based on a classic science fiction novel *and* possibly the first-ever blues song based on the writings of a long-dead Chinese philosopher. Those details alone don't make this album a cut above the rest; it's the quality of the resulting music that really nails it!

"Civilization Blues" begins with a slow, bluesy head and then evolves into first a folksy vocal for Marini and then a harmonious instrumental for everyone. The song bounces from vocal to instrumental a couple of times before fading away.

Besides Marini on vocal and sax, we have Goldstein on piano, Mironov on guitar, Kondor on the synthesizer, Bandrena on percussion, and Gottlieb on drums.

"In My Dreams" is a modern love song, and has a big vocal component. It opens with Marini singing, "I go driving in my car..." The most prosaic thing of all that modern man can do is drive his car. But who has sung about one? I mean, besides the Beach Boys crooning "[She's real fine, my 409](#)"?

Marini's vocal style fits the subject, sounding exactly like a man who has, to use the vernacular, "Been there, done that" when it comes to having loved and lost.

(I hasten to add that I know very little about Marini's actual personal life, other than what I have read as I researched this article. The conclusions I'm stating here are pure conjecture on my part and could be all hot air.)

Marini's voice has the smoothness of a man who has loved, lost, and, eventually, moved on with his life. The pain is behind him, but clearly not forgotten.

Skipping ahead, we find a wonderfully gentle ballad called "Mom And Dad". This was written for Marini's parents, and as you listen, you can feel the gentle fondness with which he holds their memory.

In between the vocal segments the guys take what could have been a maudlin' memorial and turn it into a nice piece of music with great rhythm and an undeniable sense of nostalgia that has more in common with a celebration of lives lived fully than it does with a lament for those lost forever.

The album ends with a reprise of "Starmaker", albeit a much shorter version than the opening cut. This one trades the ethereal, other-worldly opening of the original for a somewhat similar ending.

Which is not to say that there is no sense of flight here, because that, ultimately, is what the song is about, a flight to the stars in search of the star maker.

I've been lucky enough to be on vacation from my day job this last week. By a happy stroke of good timing, "Starmaker" and another CD both showed up in my mailbox on Monday. Both have been in my 6-disc CD player all week, being, if you will, the background music for my life these last six days.

Which is why I can state unequivocally that I am certain you will find Lou Marini's "Starmaker" to be an exceptional addition to your personal playlist, for a Saturday or any other night!

You can read more about Lou Marini, "Starmaker", and his other music at his [web site](#).

You can also "Like" him on [Facebook](#). I just did.

Ordinarily I try to embed a few videos from the reviewed album, but because I'm running late with this today I will instead give you the link to [Lou Marini's YouTube channel](#).

I think you find a lot there to enjoy.

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THE BLOG COVERS INTERESTING RELEASES, ESPECIALLY IN THE AREAS OF FREE AND MAINSTREAM JAZZ AS WELL AS CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL AND AVANT GARDE MUSIC. THE EMPHASIS WILL FOR THE MOST PART BE ON SMALLER LABELS. BOTH ESTABLISHED MUSICIANS AND LESSER KNOWN ARTISTS THAT DESERVE ATTENTION WILL BE COVERED, WITH THE ACCENT ON WHERE WE ARE RIGHT NOW.

thursday, december 6, 2012

Lou Marini, *Starmaker*



I never paid much attention to Lou Marini in the past, even though he's been pretty ubiquitous. Listening to his new solo album *Starmaker* (BluJazz 3394), I hear something that gets my attention. It's a straight-ahead, somewhat commercial, somewhat electric date, with some very competent

sidemen and arrangements that are just fine. The tunes are interesting from a compositional standpoint.

But what is the main thing going for this is Lou Marini's playing. He's something else. He has a soulful rasp when he wants it and his lines are not at all typical, having bop-Trane and after in there in unusual ways. He sings a little but that's some band vocal stuff.

It's an album that shows you that Lou Marini is a *player* with a capital "p". Gil Goldstein, by the way, plays some hip things on piano too.

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