



ADAM ROGERS

Time and the Infinite

SCOTT COLLEY
BILL STEWART



Criss Cross Jazz 1286

Criss 1286 CD

TIME AND THE INFINITE

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1. **NIGHT AND DAY**
(C. Porter) 5.35
2. **ELEGY**
(A. Rogers) 5.40
3. **TIME AND THE INFINITE**
(A. Rogers) 3.19
4. **YOUNG AND FOOLISH**
(Horwit-Hague) 7.06
5. **CHERYL**
(Ch. Parker) 6.42
6. **ESTEBAN**
(A. Rogers) 5.20
7. **WITHOUT A SONG**
(V. Youmans) 8.52
8. **IDES OF MARCH**
(A. Rogers) 5.21
9. **I LOVES YOU, PORGY**
(G. Gershwin) 10.25

ADAM ROGERS guitar
SCOTT COLLEY bass
BILL STEWART drums

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Mastering: The Masters
Recorded: March 17, 2006
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Recorded at Systems Two Recording Studios, Brooklyn, N.Y.
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TOTAL TIME: 58.56

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Time and the Infinite

It's hard to imagine an album title more expansive than **Time and the Infinite**. But **Adam Rogers's** fourth recording for **Criss Cross** in fact represents a paring down. His 2002 debut, **Art of the Invisible** (Criss Cross 1223), was a complex quartet session with pianist Edward Simon, bassist Scott Colley and drummer Clarence Penn. The next two releases, **Allegory** (Criss Cross 1242) and **Apparitions** (Criss Cross 1263), added the acclaimed saxophonist Chris Potter to the lineup and featured all original music – much of it dauntingly difficult, even epic in its scope and expressive intent. With this project, Rogers shifts his focus to the bare essentials and issues his first-ever trio album as a leader. "I've been playing in a trio setting for years," he says, "and after these three relatively ambitious recordings I've done, I wanted to try something different. The trio setting is more exposed and involves more improvising on my part, which is exciting to me."

By now Rogers is well established as a versatile guitarist with astounding chops and impeccable taste. Several years ago he thrilled international audiences as a sideman in Michael Brecker's quartet. Among his recent recording credits are John Patitucci's **Line By Line** (Concord), Edward Simon's **Simplicitas** (Criss Cross 1267), Alex Sipiagin's **Returning** (Criss Cross 1270) and Eliane Elias's **Around the City** (Bluebird/RCA Victor), not to mention offerings by the vocalists Norah Jones, Chiara Civello and Erin Bode. Thankfully, Rogers's brilliance has been richly documented, but even so, this new trio session – which features him on four Songbook standards and a Charlie Parker blues line in addition to four originals – is something unprecedented in his discography. And if the result is more understated than his previous outings, it is in its own way just as intricate and revelatory.

"I've been playing these standards for years," notes Rogers, "and what they elicit from

me as an improviser is very special, something specific that is an important part of my musical identity. I was also struck by the idea of some kind of compiled songbook of my own, standards that have meaning to me as well as my own 'standards,' reflecting my history as a composer. If there is a thread through all of these pieces in terms of melodic relationship, it's the idea of taking strong simple melodies and setting them in what I think is an interesting framework."

Not surprisingly, bassist **Scott Colley** and drummer **Bill Stewart** proved to be the ideal partners for the journey. Colley has appeared on every Rogers-led session to date, along with eight other **Criss Cross** discs, including his own **Subliminal** (1157). He has also hired Rogers for his various leader projects, including **Initial Wisdom** (Palmetto, 2002) and **Architect of the Silent Moment** (CAM Jazz, forthcoming as of this writing). Stewart has worked with Rogers in Brecker's road band, not to mention Colley's, and he has worked extensively with other major guitarists, including John Scofield and Pat Metheny. "With Bill and Scott there's so much space there to do what you do," marvels Rogers. "They're amazing virtuosos but their brilliance is also reflected when they are playing the simplest things, i.e., the root functions of their instruments. The music can get extremely simple and spacious but it never lacks intensity. It's always somehow profound to me, even if Scott's just playing whole notes or Bill's just playing the simplest thing. Their qualities of sound are so beautiful – it can be really conducive to playing minimally."

Cole Porter's **Night and Day** undergoes a thorough renovation. "It's a simple and powerful melody that I've been playing for years," Rogers explains. "I hadn't planned on reworking this but the arrangement naturally occurred to me while I was playing through the tune." The first five bars are reharmonized, with a bar of 3/4 that adds rhythmic suspense. Joe

Henderson's changes, from the version on Inner Urge, come into play during the solos. Rogers tears through his six choruses like a cheetah. After a restatement of the theme, Stewart takes a drum solo over a Rogers-penned vamp: four bars of 4/4 and one of 5/4, Rogers explains. "It's a series of chords that harmonize the notes C, E, E flat, B flat, F, G and D flat."

Elegy grew out of rather dark circumstances: a catastrophic fire in a neighboring apartment that put Rogers out of his home for roughly six months. It happened in the fall of 2004. The damage was extensive, but no one was killed, and Rogers's gear was unharmed. "I wrote the piece late one night in the apartment I was staying in during that time, and it's reflective of that period of my life. There was no great tragedy, but I did feel displaced." The hesitating, syncopated figures in the bass create a sense of unease and unresolved motion. Rogers tunes down to a low D, thickening the overall darkness. "I'm not sure what the tune signifies; maybe the things you knew or had that aren't around anymore. It resonates in a slightly sad way. It's in D minor but there are all these passing harmonies that create a more complex feeling behind the relatively simple melody."

The title track, *Time and the Infinite*, written in the late '90s, is actually a transcription of a solo piece for classical guitar, much like "*Was*" from Allegory and "*Dry September*" from John Patitucci's Line By Line. In fact, Rogers once seriously considered pursuing a career as a classical guitarist. "Studying classical music has had an incredibly pervasive influence on me," he says. "The influence on my concept of sound is huge." This particular piece is entirely through-composed and packs quite a few challenges into three minutes. "It's really hard to get the bass and the guitar part to lock up because everything is on an upbeat," Rogers remarks. "It starts out with something very metrically complex, but the bridge is all

in 3/4, with a repeating figure that goes through different tonalities over an E pedal. Scott plays that long melody with the bow. When I conceived of this I was specifically hearing an opera singer or a bowed instrument. There's also the influence of Egberto Gismonti and Brazilian classical music, especially Heitor Villa-Lobos."

Staying with nylon-string guitar for the ballad *Young and Foolish*, Rogers achieves an effortless lyricism and basks in the glow of his bass-and-drum team. "This is a perfect example of the tonal beauty that Scott and Bill have," he enthuses. "Their playing on this exemplifies that 'profound simplicity.' Scott plays the roots of these chords with as much conviction as he would play a bass concerto. And the texture Bill creates – it's this impermeable thing that's moving through the whole tune." Finding inspiration in the ageless Bill Evans version from Everybody Digs Bill Evans, Rogers takes further liberties. "Again, there's this simple triadic motion in the melody; it hovers around C but there are so many harmonic possibilities. I left the first bar in 4/4 with the standard first two chords, but the second bar is in 5/4. I use the same roots, but the last three beats are a reharmonized G flat-6 flat-9 chord. I added a sixteenth-note bass figure and went ahead and really reworked this, while landing on some key harmonic points from the original tune."

Transforming Charlie Parker's *Cheryl* into an uptempo 13-bar blues, Rogers and crew swing heavy and hard, with Colley and Stewart trading choruses after the leader has his say. "Charlie Parker was probably my first big influence as an aspiring jazz musician," says Rogers. "I was trying to play like Hendrix when I was 14 or 15, and I had a saxophonist friend who only read Bird solos from the *Omnibook*. I'd come over and try to accompany him while he played these solos. Even though I didn't really understand it, the music started to seep into me, and that's how I became obsessed with jazz."

Through Bird, Rogers also came to perceive the uncanny profundity of the blues. “*Cheryl* is this beautiful little gem of melody and modulated harmony,” he says. “I always thought it was a great example of Bird’s ethos as a composer.”

Rogers wrote ***Esteban***, another acoustic guitar feature, in the early 1990s. It was inspired by the Gabriel García Márquez short story “*The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World*,” in which villagers become enraptured by a drowned man who washes up on their shore. They give him the name of Esteban. “The people take him into their midst and celebrate him with a big funeral,” Rogers says. “In preparing, everyone starts to project who they think he was in life. The women fall in love with him, the men envy him and the little kids worship him. They all create this imagined persona. It’s a great story about our ability to project our own images onto people or a situation based on what we’re looking for in life. I wrote this piece from start to finish immediately after I read the story, so I felt the song was influenced by it.” Rogers imagines the “*Esteban*” character with a distinctly South American folk flavor. Colley plays the main melody initially.

The trio’s approach to ***Without a Song*** is straightforward, and yet not far into Rogers’s solo, complexity rears its head. The rhythmic elasticity of his phrasing encourages a palpable tension in the group, as the interplay heats up and Stewart moves from brushes to sticks. In aesthetic terms the arrangement is straightforward – directly influenced, in fact, by Sonny Rollins’s classic version on *The Bridge*, which featured guitar master Jim Hall. Rogers had the pleasure of sitting in and playing this tune with Hall at the Village Vanguard, in honor of Hall’s birthday in 2005. “The simple triadic melody is really evocative to me,” Rogers notes. His vocabulary here is rooted in bebop. His melodic logic is clear and compelling, but there is nothing “standard” about the blistering runs and deft

chordal passages that crop up in the second chorus, for instance.

Rogers wrote ***I des of March*** specifically for this project. What starts as a fairly calm groove quickly becomes a tangle of mixed meters and stark transitions. The blowing section is entirely free of prescribed chords or tempo. “There’s so much information in the tune itself that it felt logical to have a free solo section as a sort of resolution to all the tension in the melody,” Rogers says. “I had the idea for a very relaxed intro leading to these flurries of metric and harmonic activity, then going back to this simple vamp. A lot of music is about tension and release, and for this I wanted moments of serenity interspersed with sections of activity and vice versa.” As challenging as it is brief, the piece offers another window on this trio’s chemistry and creative range. Stewart’s cymbal colors are especially inventive.

I Loves You, Porgy begins with a meditative guitar intro in single notes, transitioning to a slow ballad feel. It’s worth noting that George Gershwin wrote this as an aria. Rogers captures the vocal quality of the wide intervals, playing in a fairly high register until the bridge. “Again, it’s based on a simple triadic idea, but it’s so beautifully put together,” he notes. “I’ve always loved the Miles Davis/Gil Evans version of this song. Bill Evans’s version from *Bill Evans at the Montreux Jazz Festival* was also an inspiration.” Colley solos first; Rogers responds with ornate yet lyrically centered ideas and closes with a thoughtful cadenza.

That Rogers ultimately dedicated himself to jazz improvisation, despite his years of classical training, has something to do with the title of this CD. “I’ve thought a lot about the things that we can quantify, meaning time, and the things that we can’t, namely the

infinite," he muses. "One of the most inspiring things about becoming a musician is there is a great mystery inherent in the pursuit. You never really know what's going to happen when you play music. You can do all the practicing and preparation in the world and the end result is usually unexpected. Even after years of playing there is still so much mystery in this art, which can be wonderful, surprising, sometimes confusing but rarely uninteresting. The same is true of life in general." Our relative lack of knowledge may seem bewildering, but to hear creative artists like Rogers make their way through what he calls "this cosmic morass" can have a very clarifying effect. Yes, we can never take the full measure of musical infinity. But we can listen closely, and with much delight, as Rogers continues his ascent.

David R. Adler

New York, December 2006

Special thanks to Scott and Bill for their amazing contribution. Also to Soomi Kim and my family for their love and support.

This record is dedicated to the memory of Michael Brecker.

Adam Rogers