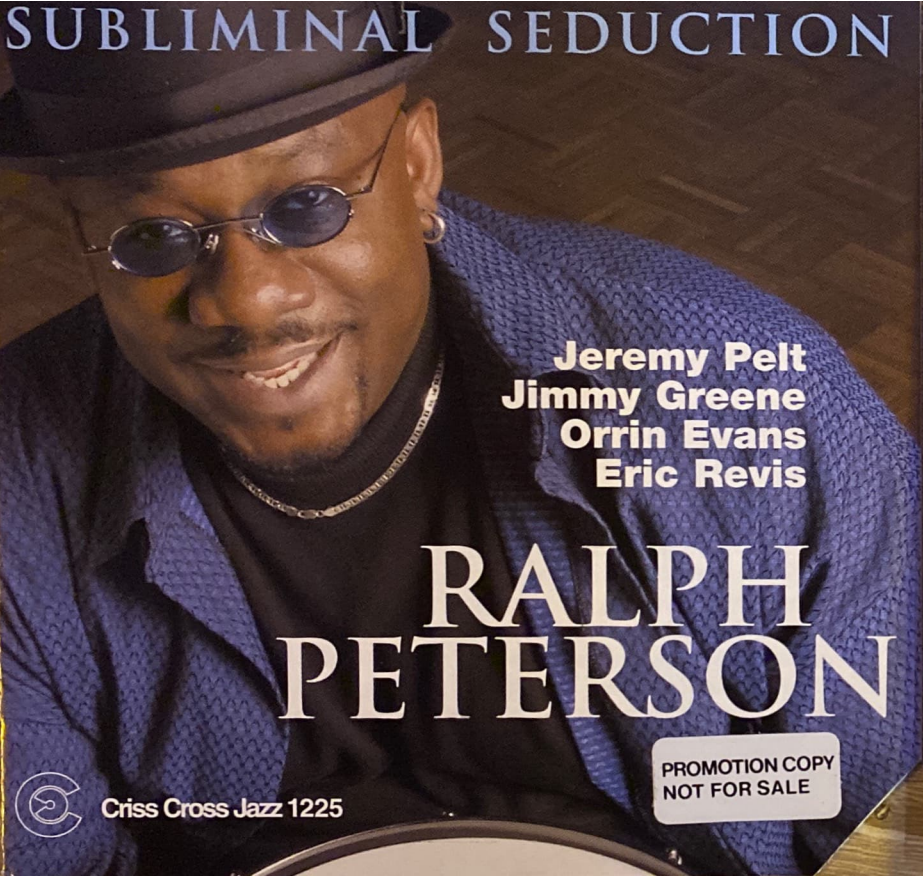



SUBLIMINAL SEDUCTION



**Jeremy Pelt
Jimmy Greene
Orrin Evans
Eric Revis**

RALPH PETERSON

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 Criss Cross Jazz 1225

CRISS 1225 CD

Made in Holland **D D D**

SUBLIMINAL SEDUCTION RALPH PETERSON QUINTET

1. **TRIALS OF TRUST AND TREACHERY**
(R. Peterson) 5.03
2. **THE VICIOUS CYCLE**
(R. Peterson) 6.56
3. **THE FIFTH INSIGHT**
(R. Peterson) 2.23
4. **TEARS I CANNOT HIDE**
(R. Peterson) 5.45
5. **ESSENCE OF THE WIZARD**
(R. Peterson) 10.07
6. **BUT I NEVER LEFT**
(R. Peterson) 6.21
7. **THE SEVENTH INSIGHT**
(R. Peterson) 3.06
8. **SOCIAL RESPONSE**
(J. Pelt) 4.42
9. **I ONLY MISS HER WHEN SHE'S GONE**
(Cahn-Van Heusen) 3.48
10. **SYNERGY**
(R. Peterson) 4.57
11. **SUBLIMINAL SEDUCTION**
(R. Peterson) 3.42

RALPH PETERSON drums
JEREMY PELT trumpet, fluegelhorn
JIMMY GREENE tenor & soprano sax
ORRIN EVANS piano
ERIC REVIS bass

Produced by Gerry Teekens
Executive Producer: K. Hasselpflug
Recording Engineer: Max Bolleman
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Subliminal Seduction

Ralph Peterson's recording career is a long and profound story. He came up during what Don Byron calls "the first blush of young lionhood" in the 1980s, making his mark first as a co-leader of Out of the Blue (OTB), the celebrated house band for Blue Note Records. It didn't take long for Peterson to emerge as one of the truly important drummers and bandleaders of his generation. He led six memorable dates for Blue Note before moving on to brief yet productive stints with Evidence and Sirocco, recording mainly with his flagship ensemble, the Ralph Peterson Fo'tet.

In 2001 Peterson debuted on **Criss Cross** with The Art of War (Criss 1206), returning to the quintet format that marked his earliest recordings. The same powerful lineup is back for more on **Subliminal Seduction**. "If you count the OTB dates - and you have to count them - then this is my 15th record as a leader," Peterson says, with a hard-earned and world-weary confidence. "It's almost as if The Art of War and this one belong in a two-CD set," he continues. "That's exactly what I was shooting for, a continuity from one to the other, like two parts of the same thought." The full-throttle intensity of the first record can still be heard on the second, although this time Peterson strikes a more deliberate balance between what he calls "head pieces" and "heart pieces."

Peterson borrowed the album title from a 1973 book by Wilson Bryan Key, *Subliminal Seduction: Ad Media's Manipulation of a Not So*

Innocent America. "It's an interesting book, but my title doesn't have anything to do with it," he explains with a laugh. "With the word 'subliminal' I'm looking at how our subconscious stores our true intent," he elaborates. "It's always my goal to 'seduce' the listener. I'm also trying to destroy the 'subliminal' notion that drummers aren't capable of leading bands, both from a musical and a marketing standpoint. If you look around today's scene, there are no drummers under 60 - make that 70, actually - who are getting any kind of recognition as leaders."

But few - least of all the phenomenal players in this quintet - could question Peterson's ability to lead, as well as to nurture new talent. "It took almost two years to put the components of this band together, and the first time we hit, it was like we had been a band the whole time." The connections fell into place naturally. "The first time I heard **Jeremy Pelt** was at the senior recital of Pete Vannostrand, one of my students at Rutgers," Peterson recalls. "I remember thinking to myself, 'keep this guy close.' I hooked up with **Jimmy Greene** mainly through Tom Harrell's quintet and octet. Then one night I sat down to dinner with him in Paris and found out that he and Jeremy had been tight in school. So already, you see, the synergy was forming." Listeners can get another taste of that synergy on Pelt's recent debut album, Profile, featuring - among others - Greene and Peterson.

About his bassist Peterson enthuses, "I only needed to hear

Eric Revis once to know that we had to work together. He writes great music, has a great sound, and can play through all kinds of dense solo sections." Of all the quintet's members, however, Peterson shares an especially strong bond with pianist **Orrin Evans**. "My relationship with Orrin is much like Shaq's relationship with Kobe Bryant," says Peterson, who turns to basketball for analogies with some frequency. "He's a close friend and confidante. He's also developed one of the most individualistic voices on his instrument and has the potential to make some really profound statements." Two of Evans's Criss Cross albums, **Captain Black** (Criss Cross 1154) and **Grown Folk Bizness** (Criss Cross 1175), feature none other than Peterson in the drum chair. One can also hear Evans, Pelt, and Revis together on **Pharoah's Children** (Criss Cross 1221), a fine record by tenor saxophonist J.D. Allen, who happens to be a first-call sub for Jimmy Greene on Peterson's quintet gigs.

Peterson conceived these original compositions as "love chronicles" of a sort, threading together a series of social and spiritual messages. The program begins with ***Trials of Trust and Treachery***, a brash but fitful theme that gives way to fierce, uptempo swing on the solos. "Trust is the foundation of any relationship," says Peterson. "Once it's shattered or destabilized, treachery ensues, not just between men and women but between friends and musicians, and in business." ***The Vicious Cycle***, with its seamless melange of Latin rhythms, is part of the same scenario. "The trials themselves can become a

vicious cycle," Peterson continues. "And the thing about those cycles is that we often don't know we're in them. They're 'subliminal' in nature. Often it requires the input of an outside party to make us aware. That can pertain to drugs, or arguing, or any number of things." Evans takes the first solo, his rapport with Peterson on full display. Greene picks up the tale on tenor, followed by two incisive, melodic choruses from Pelt on fluegelhorn.

The ***Fifth Insight*** and ***The Seventh Insight*** are both unaccompanied drum solos. "I'm at a stage in my playing where I think there's enough depth and creativity to make two-, three-, or four-minute statements," Peterson explains. "I was inspired by Tony Williams, and also by my drum teacher, Michael Carvin, whose ***Drum Concerto at Dawn*** is a complete solo record. The titles come from the work of James Redfield - The Celestine Prophecy and subsequent books - and the focus I've derived from some of his concepts. The fifth insight is the message of the mystics. It's about creativity rather than control. The seventh insight says you'll never get the answer you're looking for in life until you formulate your question. That concept made me pause. I had to reexamine my quest for answers and turn it into a quest for questions."

Tears I Cannot Hide, a beautiful melody in a 3/4 triplet feel, concerns the human need for emotional release. Revis leads off with the first solo, setting the stage for concise statements by Greene on soprano

sax, then Evans. Peterson's mallet textures are absorbing throughout. "Some people have an easy time with crying. My music is a way to purge those feelings; it's healing in the same way that crying can be. For a long time I bought into the idea that men aren't supposed to cry. It kept me jammed up emotionally and left me with unresolved issues. Either you deal with unresolved issues or they deal with you."

Essence of the Wizard got its title when Peterson looked up synonyms for "sorcerer" in the dictionary. "This is my ode to the Miles quintet," he says. "There are fragments of '*Prince of Darkness*' in the melody. ***Wizard*** is absolutely impossible to play the same way twice, because the structure is both fixed and open. Part of the way through the solos we stop playing the structure, but we use quotations from the theme to create shifts in the direction of the solos." Not surprisingly, this one evolved on the bandstand, as does much of Peterson's music. "We played it for a week, and by the end of that week, boy, it was great - not even I could plainly tell the sections apart. That's exactly where I wanted the piece to go. The new music I'm preparing for the quintet will explore more of that looseness."

But I Never Left contains an obscure R&B reference. "The harmonic motion in the first six or seven bars comes from '*In the Stone*,' one of my favorite Earth, Wind & Fire tunes," Peterson reveals. "But again, it's 'subliminal' in nature." Over a mellow, loping bossa feel, the horns state the melody, creating rich dissonance when they fall out of

unison. Pelt takes the first two A sections on fluegehorn, yielding to Greene's soprano sax on the B section until the end of the form, when the melody returns. Just when you think the track is winding down, Evans lets loose over an edgy, double-time coda.

Social Response is a straightforward, hard-hitting swinger by Jeremy Pelt, who is the first to solo over the intriguing one-per-bar changes. Greene moves adeptly through his choruses, and Evans responds with some of his best playing on the date. ***I Only Miss Her***, the only other non-Peterson entry, is a Cahn/Van Heusen standard that Jimmy Greene learned while working with Harry Connick, Jr. On this ballad feature, Greene's horn sings with an aching vulnerability, and the song becomes his own. In a subtle twist, he plays most of the concluding melody with only Evans's piano behind him.

Synergy refers to the phenomenon "when all of the elements in a unit reach a point of equal harmony or vibration, thinking and feeling as one. Musically this is what I strive for, not just with the quintet." Greene and Pelt take turns negotiating the difficult rhythmic contours. Of the closing ***Subliminal Seduction***, Peterson remarks: "I learned the concept of writing tone poems from Kenny Barron. This is a relatively short piece, and I found the combination of chords very soothing, like a love song." Pelt is the only soloist, but Peterson is quick to clarify: "Kenny Dorham and Mingus used to write short, beautiful pieces with no solos on them, allowing the composition to

stand on its own. So when we encore with this, we tend to do it without any solos, like a vignette. That way, we leave the audience in a soft space instead of sending them out of the club all jacked up. That's not necessarily what you'd expect from me."

Like most jazz musicians, Peterson thinks more in terms of the stage than the studio. "A CD is one particular set of conclusions," he says. "It's a peek at what could possibly happen when we play. Making a record is one of the most unnatural things in music, not least of all because you have to get up early in the morning to do it." No doubt the band was wide awake as soon as Peterson picked up those drum sticks. Spin **Subliminal Seduction**, dear reader/listener, and you will be too.

David R. Adler

Downbeat, All Music Guide, All About Jazz

New York, NY, August 2002