

The background features several hand-drawn musical staves in various colors (purple, yellow, red, blue, green) with notes and chords. The chords are labeled with text such as 'Eb m 9 (add 13)', 'Bb7 (#5)', 'Eb-6', 'Bb7', 'Bb7', 'Bb7', 'B6/9', 'B', 'Bb7', 'Ab-7', 'G#7', 'F#7 (b9 b5)', 'Ab-7', and 'Ab-7'.

JASON MARSALIS

AND THE

21ST CENTURY TRAD BAND

Melody Reimagined : book 1

Back Row: (L-R) Austin Johnson,
Dave Potter, Will Goble.
Front: Jason Marsalis



JASON MARSALIS

AND THE 21ST CENTURY TRAD BAND

Melody Reimagined : book 1

1. Ratio Man Strikes Again 6:02
2. Off the Rails 5:08
3. Just as Cool as the Other Side of the Pillow 9:38
4. Soot Sprites 4:42
5. A Peaceful Silence 5:52
6. Bourbon Street Ain't Mardi Gras 6:29
7. Passionate Dancer 6:09
8. Never Forget the 23rd Letter 7:11
9. 80* 7:34

JASON MARSALIS vibes

AUSTIN JOHNSON piano

WILL GOBLE bass

DAVE POTTER drums

ELLIS MARSALIS piano*

DELFEAYO MARSALIS trombone*

All compositions written by Jason Marsalis

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JASON MARSALIS



On various shows I've done as a leader, original compositions would be mixed with standards for the setlist. Spontaneous arrangements would evolve to spice up the standards. As these standards would evolve into originals, a concept for an album was born: original compositions based on the harmonic structure, or chord changes, from other songs. In previous years, harmonic structures from the standard American songbook would be used to create new melodies. For example, Duke Ellington's "In a Mellow Tone" is based on the harmony from "Rose Room," while Charlie Parker's "Ornithology" is based on the harmony from "How High the Moon." For this album, harmonies from not only the American songbook are utilized, but jazz standards, traditional jazz, and even 1980's pop music contains chord changes to inspire these new pieces. We hope that this will be a fresh and familiar experience for the listener.





RATIO MAN STRIKES AGAIN

On this group's last recording, *The 21st Century Trad Band*, we recorded our drummer Dave Potter's original entitled "Ratio Man." As we were playing this tune live one of the nights our pianist Austin Johnson started to play this riff. I started to play it with him and that riff starts off this composition. "Ratio Man" is about Austin who is mostly quiet but knows when to say the right thing at the right time. As I was writing this piece, I decided to use aspects of the bridge from "Ratio Man," and it developed into the chord progression from John Coltrane's tune "Traneing In." Coltrane also used this progression on "Locomotion" from his *Blue Trane* album. We made a few key changes to the chords to keep the listener on their toes and to give the musicians a challenge.

OFF THE RAILS

"You've Stepped out of a Dream" is a classic standard that musicians today often perform live. On one of our performances, we started to play a dirge-like rhythm that matched the rhythm of the melody. Instead of keeping with the same often-covered melody, this quasi-arrangement was used to develop a new composition. With its unorthodox melody, off-kilter stop-time breaks for the drums, and oddly placed interlude during the piano solo, it's title refers to the state of politics in the world, especially the U.S. of A.

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JUST AS COOL AS THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PILLOW

Based on Ann Ronnell's "Willow Weep for Me," this evolved into a bass/vibes feature for the melody while the piano and drums plays at certain sections. It serves as a way to break down the ensemble to give space to the music and listener. It was around this time that sports anchor Stuart Scott passed away. As a lead black anchor, he was a unique personality during the 1990s heyday of ESPN's flagship sports news show "SportsCenter," and was sorely missed by the sports community when he left us too soon. Known for his hip-hop like catchphrases such as "Booyah!" and "Playa Hatin'," this tune is named after a phrase he would use when describing a great scoring play. We use the harmony and final riff from the theme song to "SportsCenter" in his memory.

SOOT SPRITES

Dave Potter came up with an arrangement of the Victor Feldman classic "Seven Steps to Heaven." It consisted of the folk rhythm from Puerto Rico, "plena," a rhythm commonly heard used in the music of David Sanchez and Miguel Zenon. This arrangement became the backbone of subsequent melodic and rhythmic ideas that would fuel a new piece. As for the title, it's a very unusual name association that I'll try to spell out. Seven Steps to Heaven - 7UP - Sprite - Soot Sprites (from the film *My Neighbor Totoro*).



A PEACEFUL SILENCE

Horace Silver and Charlie Haden were two important contributors to the music. While they were both bandleaders in their own right, Silver made his first mark as the first musical director of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers in the mid-1950s while Haden made his as bassist with Ornette Coleman in the late 1950s. Sadly, both musicians passed away close to one month apart. In thinking of their contributions, two ballads, Silver's "Peace" and Haden's "Silence," came together in my mind. The melody switches places with the harmony as a variation of Haden's "Silence" occurs on the chords from Silver's "Peace" and vice versa. This is what is referred to in modern day terms as a "mash-up."



BOURBON STREET AIN'T MARDI GRAS

While the harmony comes from the classic New Orleans traditional jazz standard "Bourbon Street Parade," the melody is influenced by artists such as Ornette Coleman, Lennie Tristano, and Lenny White (think of the tune "Sorceress"). Compared to the standards from the American songbook, there's a small amount of harmonies of traditional jazz tunes that have been used to create original melody lines today. The chord changes are very open and a musician doesn't have to limit himself to playing traditional ideas. The title is about how the Mardi Gras celebration in New Orleans often is reduced to the decadence that occurs on Bourbon Street. The flaw with this idea is that Bourbon Street carries on like this all year, and Mardi Gras is a celebration connected to religion, as it is the day before Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent. Ironically, the tune would be classified in a more modern jazz vein, a style which is wrongly not associated with New Orleans at all.

PASSIONATE DANCER

One may not expect chord changes from a pop song released in the 1980s to inspire a jazz tune. However, when stumbling across Michael Sambello's #1 hit "Maniac" from the film *Flashdance*, I noticed the chords for the first time after hearing it many times through the years and never realized how complex they were. Popular music has a lot to distract you with its music videos, beats, production, and lyrics to the point where it is easy to take the music for granted. Upon discovering the chord changes, I knew that an original was going to be written. The dancer is a reference to Jennifer Beals' character in the movie, Alex Owens.

NEVER FORGET THE 23RD LETTER

"Avalon" is a tune I've played with traditional musicians in New Orleans. As I started to play it on my own set, it's slowly but surely started changing and becoming something that wasn't "Avalon" anymore. While the root notes of the chords are the same, the quality of the chords are very different. G-7 becomes G \emptyset , C7 turns into C7(#9), FMaj turns into F-7(b5), and there are many more changes. Because of these alterations, the chord changes may not be recognizable as "Avalon," but the sound of the progression can be felt underneath the music. The title was inspired by the 2016 Presidential Election.



80

"80" was initially inspired by my father's 80th birthday. He would play a chord progression over the song "The Very Thought of You," which he says he took from pianist Hank Jones, and it would inspire me to write a melody. My father was scheduled to record the song when about a month before the session, the sound of my brother Delfeayo playing the melody came to mind. He was then added to the recording. However, the dedication and meaning of the song changed when my mother, and Ellis' wife of 58 years, Dolores Marsalis, passed away at age 80. I'm very grateful my father and brother were able to join me on this session since we're all results of my mother's legacy.

Producer: Jason Marsalis
Executive Producer: Mark Samuels

***Ellis and Delfeayo Marsalis appear on track 9, "80"**

**Recorded at Parlor Recording Studios in
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**Additional Recording at Music Shed and
Ellis Marsalis Center for Music in New Orleans, LA**

**Engineering: Nick Guttman & Matt Grondin
Assistant: Mack Major**

**Mixing & Editing: Nick Guttman, Jason Marsalis
Additional Editing: Ben Lorio**

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This recording is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Dolores Ferdinand Marsalis, who left this earth on July 18th, 2017. She had amazing patience raising her sons Branford, Wynton, Ellis III, Delfeayo, Mboya, and myself. The importance to Dad's life as well can't be understated. Because of her, we are better men while she also impacted musicians from around the world. Thanks, Mom.

THANKS: My wife, Kaya, and daughters Marley, McKenzie, and Evangeline. Austin, Will, and Dave for recording the music. Jasen Weaver, Gerald T. Watkins, Jr., Oscar Rossignoli (thanks for the interlude), and Stephen Gordon for playing the music in New Orleans. Susan Young for the artwork and for also confirming that "contrafact" is a terrible word to describe jazz tunes based on chord changes from other songs.

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Jason Marsalis endorses
Musser Vibraphones and Mike Balter Mallets.

Dave Potter endorses
Mapex Drums, Sabian Cymbals, and Vic Firth Sticks.

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