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## Roberto Magris: Kansas City Outbound and Restless Spirits

Roberto Magris - Published: May 21, 2009

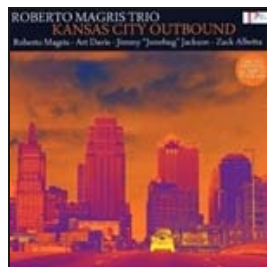
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By Jerry D'Souza

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Pianist **Roberto Magris** has scoped a wide segment of styles over his career. His main calling is in mainstream jazz, but he has sailed into several other tributaries, including progressive jazz with Alfabeats Nu Jazz and acid jazz with DMA Urban Jazz funk. Whatever the milieu, Magris plays with a focused sense for development and an assured knack for improvising.



Roberto Magris Trio  
*Kansas City Outbound*  
Pami  
2009

Magris works in the "classic" trio setting with bassist **Art Davis** and (alternating) drummers Jimmy "Junebug" Jackson and Zack Albetta. The trio has a shared sense of thought and evolution. Magris showcases a pure tone, his playing clean, even when he opens up a run of ideas. His sensing of the melody and urging it on are fine assets that

make for an immediate impact. Davis and the drummers should be given their due in the success of this venture. Davis, particularly, is the rhythmic cog, his playing sensitive to the needs of the pianist.

The CD is a mix of original material and standards starting off with the roiling blend of textures that is "Kansas City Outbound." The mood moves from open and spacey to dark and thick motifs with purpose and determination. Magris is at the helm with his deliberations before he breaks that setting with a melodic flush. Davis is in step but Jackson sets up an invigorating beat which tempers the thick clusters that draw Magris into the grain. "Rainbow Eyes" is a rhapsodic ballad. Magris establishes an ingrained emotional border, a romantic who stimulates the sensibility of the song and basks in its own glow.

Magris is astute in his selection of standards and in reworking them to his own image. "I Fall In Love Too Easily" is his fount of grace, illuminating notes and



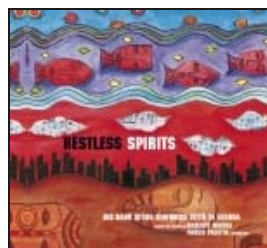
**Folk Songs for Jazzers**  
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structured chords the cohorts of articulate phrasing. "Bemsha Swing" is crisp and upbeat. Magris adds a few flourishes that augment his drive as he revitalizes the tune with fine support from Davis and Jackson.

It's a concentrated and appealing performance.



**Big Band**  Ritmo Sinfonia Citta Di Verona  
*Restless Spirits*  
Velut Luna  
2009

The Big Band Ritmo Sinfonia Citta di Verona was founded in 1946 by musicians from the Symphonic Orchestra of Verona. Over the years, the orchestra has played music by Duke Ellington, Miles Davis and Count Basie while exploring contemporary jazz sounds as well. The orchestra now pays tribute to

the music of Magris.

The CD was recorded at the Teatro Martinelli rather than in a studio to bring in a live feel. The 43 piece band nails it right on with solid contributions from Massimo Greco (trumpet and flugelhorn) and Sbibu (percussion) in addition to Magris who plays piano and the Fender Rhodes.

Magris uses a wide canvas for his compositions and his palette is rich in its colorful diversity. He daubs it with the stylistic impressionism of funk, ballads, the blues and African rhythms. And it all comes to life in the most exultant manner.

Hand claps set the beat for "African Mood" and off they are on an exuberant flight. The frontline is punchy, the counterpoint to glistening lines of the brass. Magris soars on a dynamic welter of ideas with some of the most jubilant moments coming when he locks in with the trombone and saxophone.

"Blues For My Sleeping Baby" is a swinging blues. The seamless ensemble of the orchestra nests against the percolating Fender Rhodes of Magris. Greco adds bite on the flugelhorn with pithy notes and restructures the visage of the song. Magris returns to the softer tonality of the groove he had set without sacrificing cohesion.

Folk music seeps into the fabric of "Short and Shorter." Greco probes the melody going against the grain of the bounce and then turns around to swing. Magris kisses the edge of funk, but largely immerses himself in linear melodicism. The viewpoints stand in contrast but make for a logical whole.

Magris and the Big Band Ritmo Sinfonia Citta Di Verona combine for expressively exhilarating music that will linger long in the mind and heart.

#### *Kansas City Outbound*

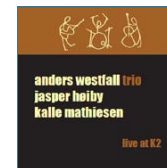
Tracks: Kansas City Outbound; I Fall In Love Too Easily; Iraqi Blues; A Flower Is A Lovable Thing; KC Inbound; Reverend Du Bop; Rainbow eyes; Bemsha Swing; Lonely Woman; Darn That Dream; Alone Together; Bye Bye Baby.

Personnel: Roberto Magris: piano; Art Davis: bass; Jimmy "Junebug" Jackson : drums (1-3, 8); Zack Albetta: drums (5-7, 10-12).

#### *Restless Spirits*

Tracks: African Mood; Blues For My Sleeping Baby; Peaceful Heart; Ambiguous; Restless Spirits; Short And Shorter; Standard Life; Maliblues; Ambiguous

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**Ken Vandermark**  
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Personnel: Marco Pasetto: conductor; Roberto Magris: piano (1, 3, 7, 8), Fender Rhodes (2-6, 9); Massimo Greco: trumpet (3-6, 9), flugelhorn (2, 7); Sbibu: percussion (1, 3-5, 7-9).

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