

Noel Pointer - Phantazia (1977)

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01. *Phantazia* 5:55 02. *Night Song* 6:48 03. *Living For The City* 6:36 04. *Rainstorm* 6:46
05. *Wayfaring Stranger* 6:55 06. *Mirabella* 5:07 07. *Fiddler On The Roof* 4:10 Noel Pointer -
electric and acoustic violin Dave Grusin - Fender Rhodes, synthesizers John Tropea - electric
guitar Will Lee - bass Steve Gadd - drums Earl Klugh - acoustic guitar Dave Valentin - flute
Lee Ritenour - electric guitar Ralph MacDonald - percussion Ian Underwood - Oberheim
synthesizer programmer Francisco Centeno - electric bass Tom Scott – woodwinds

Successful instrumental pop session from the electric violinist who was a dominant figure at Blue Note in the late '70s. Pointer could at times churn out a surprisingly riveting solo, but he spent more time plugging into rigidly arranged, heavily produced and orchestrated structures and supporting background vocalists. --- Ron Wynn, allmusic.com

Noel Pointer seems to have been forgotten, even though he was a prominent artist on the Blue Note label in the 1970s and early 1980s. He trained as a classical violinist and actually appeared as a soloist with various symphony orchestras, but he became interested in jazz when he was studying at New York City's High School of Music and Art.

Phantazia was his debut album, recorded in 1977. The opening title-track, composed by Dave

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Grusin, might lead the listener to think this was going to be an album of jazz-funk, with Will Lee's electric bass and Steve Gadd's bass drum (not tom-tom, as the sleeve-note suggests) laying down a powerfully funky foundation. Noel Pointer's violin creates unearthly effects with help from an Echoplex. John Tropea adds a groovy guitar solo.

The mood changes completely for the next track - Earl Klugh's Night Song - which has Klugh's Spanish-style guitar behind Pointer's gliding violin. So this isn't going to be a jazz-funk album but a succession of changing moods. The unifying element is sweet melody, with Dave Grusin's rich arrangements providing aural pleasure throughout.

There's more jazz-funk in Stevie Wonder's Living for the City, again underpinned by Will Lee and Steve Gadd. Pointer solos with gusto. The varying moods change again with the hustling samba Rainstorm, the delicate 19th-century folk-song Wayfaring Stranger (with very poignant violin from Noel Pointer), the flamenco style of Earl Klugh's Mirabella, and an unusual arrangement of Fiddler on the Roof which turns the tune into funk but retains some of the Russian-Jewish feel of the original. ---Tony Augarde, musicweb-international.com

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