

Frank Harrison Trio - Lunaris (2014)

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01. *My Love and I* 02. *I'm Old Fashioned* 03. *Stars* 04. *An Evening of Spaceships and UFOs* 05. *Io* 06. *Sunrise (Port Meadow)* 07. *Ascent* 08. *The Bird* 09. *BoRG-58* 10. *The Recruited Colier* 11. *Emily* 12. *Stars II* Frank Harrison - piano, synthesizer Dave Whitford - bass Enzo Zirilli – drums

London-based pianist Frank Harrison is probably best known for his work backing saxophonist Gilad Atzmon, but his *Lunaris* should help to raise his profile as a major league piano trio guy. It's Harrison's third recorded effort in the trio format, and it stands out in a crowded field full of talent.

Harrison and the trio go against common advice and open with a ballad, a solemn, tender, gorgeously spacious take on David Raksin's tune from the 1954 movie *Apache*, "My Love and I." It's not the most familiar of Great American Songbook compositions, but saxophonist Coleman Hawkins put it on display on his *Today and Now* (Impulse! Records, 1963), and bassist Charlie Haden covered it with his Quartet West on *Sophisticated Ladies* (Decca Records, 2011). Harrison, bassist Dave Whitford and drummer Enzo Zirille slow it down to a sensual crawl, wringing every drop of beauty from the melody. Don't open with a ballad unless you can do it this well.

The much covered "I'm Old Fashioned" rides a rhumba groove. Keith Jarrett and his Standard's Trio gave the same treatment to "Poinciana" on their *Whisper Not* (ECM Records, 2000) set, and here it acts as a perfect step-up-the-pace, brighten-the-room follow-up to the opener.

"Stars" is an abstract Harrison original, a solo piano effort, with delicate notes flashing like

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celestial lights blinking on in a dark sky, followed by what must be trio improvisation, the enigmatic "An Evening of Spacehips and UFOs," to let us know this isn't going to be a straight-though standards album—there's going to be more mystery and exploration here. The tune wanders in deep space until a gravitational pull asserts itself, drawing the trio into a groove. The Harrison original, "Io" (one of the planet Jupiter's four Galilean moons) has a subtle, eerie sheen added to the composition's majesty by the addition of Harrison's synthesizer colorings. "Sunrise (Port Meadow)" is bright and hopeful. "BoRG-58" is a prickly, muscular trio improvisation. Johnny Mandel's "Emily" has never sounded lovelier or more lively, with exceptional trio interplay, leading into the disc's closer, Harrison's solo "Stars II," a brief, lean, beautiful rumination.

Lunaris is a marvelous piano trio outing—fresh takes on some of the standards and a bunch of forward-leaning originals by piano star on the rise. ---Dan McLanaghan, allaboutjazz.com

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