

## Arturo O'Farrill - Boss Level (2016)

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1 *Miss Stephanie* 8:33 2 *True That* 7:17 3 *The Moon Follows Us Wherever We Go* 9:11  
4 *Circle Games* 7:50 5 *Maine Song* 7:12 6 *Compay Doug* 8:47 7 *Not Now, Right Now*  
5:05 8 *In Whom I Am Well Pleased* 9:28 9 *V.F.S.* 6:31 10 *Peace* 4:22 Livio Almeida  
- tenor saxophone Shawn Conley - trumpet Adam O'Farrill - trumpet Arturo O'Farrill - piano  
Zack O'Farrill - drums Travis Reuter - guitar

You know that you are in the presence of musical royalty when an O'Farrill strikes up the band. Recently that has become more regular, with Arturo O'Farrill, pianist and prince of the O'Farrill line, who has inherited the best of his father Chico O'Farrill to pass it down to the third Generation of O'Farrill's, his sons, drummer Zack and trumpeter Adam, both of whom share the stage on his latest Zoho Music release, 2016's *Boss Level*. This album also debuts the latest incarnation of the Arturo O'Farrill Sextet, reconstituted after the 2010 version that produced *Risa Negra* for the same label. *Boss Level* we are told, has been put down on record after a short residency at Birdland. It seems the music's time had come and that would be a classic understatement.

Arturo O'Farrill has been mining gold from music for several years. His genius for composition has won him many accolades including a Grammy Award for his work on *Cuba: The Conversation Continues* (Motéma, 2015), a monumental album by any standards. O'Farrill has also successfully run large ensembles and small ones and if he thrives in larger format orchestras, it is because his palette is unusually large. His Cuban heritage and New York upbringing sits well with the lessons he has learned from his celebrated father.

But there is something about his piano playing that also begs attention. His virtuosity remains hidden away in the complex music that he writes and directs from the keyboard and listeners are apt to be distracted by the extra-pianistic commands that he gives. But every once and

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awhile the sparkles show whether in notes that gleam like rare gems as they are strung up in a necklace to form enduring phrases and melodic lines. And although you do not have to wait for the opportune moment to hear this you will hear what I mean if you wait for Horace Silver's 'Peace' which lies at the very end of this album.

This is a serious band and has many wonderful things going for it. There is a musical bonding that is unlike what you will hear in many bands. O'Farrill's unbridled ingenuity for arrangements draws the members of the band closer together as they explore his wonderful contrapuntal passages. Moreover each member of this band feeds off the other and when improvising you can see how thoughts and ideas flow from one musician to the next. This is beautifully captured on 'Maine Song', a contribution from O'Farrill's trumpet playing son, Adam.

You will also hear how the pianist is the glue for the spidery nature of the bands' unfolding of the extraordinary composition 'Compay Doug', a piece written for Doug Rice using that characteristic four-note phrase that leads to imaginative explorations from each member of the band. Guitarist Travis Reuter is another big reason for the sound of the sextet. His tonal colours and textures brought about elongated notes on 'Miss Stephanie' are quite masterful. Make no mistake, though, each musician in this sextet has something special to offer. And this is what makes Boss Level a must for an aficionado of good music. ---Raul da Gama, latinjazznet.com

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