

*Ain't Nothing But A Cyber Coup & You* is the second album by this group of gifted musicians, with Keir GoGwilt the only newcomer. I am grateful for the generous musicality and invention displayed by all. As with the previous album, *Sedimental You* (Clean Feed 2016), these six new compositions share certain areas of focus—pieces for fallen friends, works of irreverent political nature, and some with purely musical agendas. There are also brief solo bass improvisations interlaced between the compositions, performed on a unique bass adaptation—The McLagan Tines—invented by the ingenious luthier, engineer, and musician, Kent McLagan. These are a set of seven graduated steel rods attached to a secondary bridge that touches the bass bridge, activating the resonant cavity of the bass.

This music embraces jazz traditions more directly than my earlier recordings not for reasons of “accessibility” but rather to infuse energy, beauty, and remembrance. I think particularly of Mingus, who inspires me as bassist/composer/bandleader to engage with our current dystopian landscape from a place of hope and positive potential. Even more than on the last album, I’ve also featured timbre not as mere effect, but on equal footing with thematic materials for narrative and expressive reasons. As for the pieces:

“Black Arthur’s Bounce” is dedicated to the memory of alto saxophonist and composer Arthur Blythe, whose instantly identifiable sound was inspiring and unforgettable. In my early twenties, I had the good fortune to play with Arthur in the L.A.-based Black Music Infinity band, led by Stanley Crouch, along with Bobby Bradford, James Newton and David Murray. Given that Marty Ehrlich shared the stage with Arthur when Marty first arrived in New York City, it was impossible to resist having him bring his own rich alto playing to the track. (On every other cut Marty plays clarinet or bass clarinet.)

“Gloaming” is a kind of a parametric waltz. It is the fourth in a series of pieces I’ve written using multiple levels of polyrhythm which expand and contract within shifting meters. An unaccompanied two-voiced bass line underpins an undulating violin melody, sounding as if it might be improvised. Layers continue to be introduced between solos into an extended song form. The musical goal aims towards something free-floating and expressive, yet with a richly-detailed structure underneath.

“Let Them Eat Paper Towels” is inspired by the headline of a *New York Times* column by Nobel-Prize winning economist Paul Krugman, written in response to President Trump’s visit to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. We premiered the piece at a benefit for Puerto Rico one month after the hurricane. The bass line is an abstraction of the melody of “Que Bonita Bandera,” the unofficial national anthem of Puerto Rico, and upon which I built counterlines. The following summer I met documentary filmmaker Cecilia Aldorondo, who shared with me her powerful

work-in-progress about post-Maria Puerto Rico. After watching her film and speaking with her, I shifted the piece from being merely reactive to a dour, witty headline into a more dimensional, full-ranging narrative that embraces the subject as a historical tragedy.

“Embodied in Seoul” was first conceived for a telematic concert *Interconnections For Peace* (2018) between three different ensembles: one in New York City, one in San Diego, and one in Seoul. In this new version, I wanted to feature smaller orchestrations and distribute a single melody. The finale brings everyone together in a harmolodic whole, with independent planes of drums and bass as an improvisatory platform for Joshua White.

“Ain’t Nothing But a Cyber Coup & You” is a tune written and held fast to its title: an attempt to give acerbic levity to our national reality-horror-show of corruption, malice, xenophobia and class warfare. Winkingly reminiscent of classic titles from the Great American Song Book such as “I’m Just a Lucky So and So” and “Things Ain’t What They Used to Be,” its structure even suggests a vocal refrain, and a form similar to “I Got Rhythm.”

“Butch’s Balm” is dedicated to my friend of more than forty years, the beautiful pianist and teacher Butch Lacy. We last performed together in April 2017 in Denmark, his long-time home. During my visit he played me a solo recording of stark simplicity and pure emotion. After learning of his terminal diagnosis, I sat at the piano and transcribed the first four bars of *my memory of the feeling* of what he’d played me. The composition evolved over weeks, and when we performed it for the first time in March 2018, Butch had already passed. The last half of the tune was composed after his death.