

Music Choice

Giuseppe Paradiso,
MERIDIAN 71 –
METROPOLITAN
SKETCHES
(Self-release)

Every year I come across superb releases from musicians of various genres who have graduated from Boston's Berklee College of Music. Many of them revel in the cross-fertilisation of ideas and cultures that seem to fill the place.

Billy Cobham's *Crosswinds* is the album that keeps coming to mind when I hear Berklee graduate Paradiso's *Metropolitan Sketches*.

Both are instrumental albums by drummer/percussionists, and both are predominantly melodic jazz releases, with plenty of brass. They each incorporate a particularly serene track among the more groove-based pieces, and feature an array of quality solos, including a couple on drums, although *Metropolitan Sketches* has less urgency and funk.

Paradiso claims that he previously tended "more toward the jazz field, whereas on *Metropolitan Sketches* I wanted to incorporate more of my deeper influences. This project's line-up reflects exactly those influences, manifesting somewhere between a jazz, Mediterranean, and West African sound."



This surprises me. I detect remarkably few of those latter stimuli (maybe shades of Latin percussion) so they must be buried deep. Jazz abounds, though, from irregular time signatures to the solos.

The opening Coltrane-inspired "Nomvula (Mother of Rain)" hangs from a distinctive short riff, played and improvised around by trumpet, guitar and piano. The only brass mentioned on my press

release is trumpet from Phil Grenadier, but if this and the passionate "A Partial Life Story" have no sax, then Grenadier produces a remarkable impression on his instrument.

The particularly quiet track, "Spring" floats over a sprinkling of electric piano, with a resonant fretless bass and casual trumpet leading the tune.

Paradiso writes virtually all the material, but there is a credit for Puccini on "Lucevan le Stelle," albeit a somewhat deconstructed track.

Apart from a couple of alternate takes, the album ends with the title track, its disparate moods reflecting the cosmopolitan nature of city life.

If you like your jazz mellow and modern, with an adventurous streak, this highly professional release is worth checking out, when it is released in February.

Derek Walker