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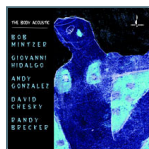
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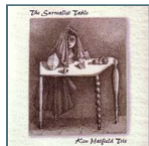
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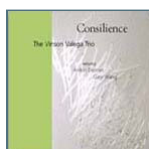
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This Way Out

John McNeil | Omnitone

A veteran musician with more than 35 years of experience, trumpeter John McNeil has played in a variety of settings including Horace Silver's quintet and the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra. His latest effort, *This Way Out*, finds him fronting a quartet of veteran drummer Joe Smith and two nascent improvisers from Spain: tenor saxophonist Gorka Benitez and bassist Giulia Valle. The quartet navigates McNeil's idiosyncratic tunes adroitly, sounding like they have played together for years. His clean, fluid lines flow confidently throughout the CD, providing a sense of wit and emotion.

"Mi Tio," the opener, is one of several pieces with an uptempo, tight ensemble melody displaying the dexterity of the musicians. The whirling head sets up individual horn solos and dynamic trading between them. "Last Minute," with its outstanding fast-walking bass line, and "Skeeter" are in a similar vein, with kinetic unison melodies.

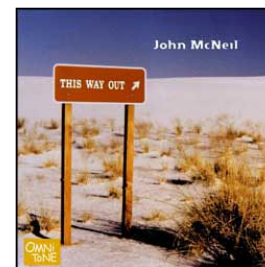
The influences of the Spanish recording location are evident on "A la Orilla," a quasi-tango rhythm set up by the bass and marching snare drum. "My Taxi" has a loping groove and segues from Benitez' contribution, "Picasso View," which features playful syncopated horn lines over a fractured rhythm. The saxophonist's other contributions, "Because of You" and "Flor de Viento," exhibit a penchant for catchy melodies and straight ahead grooves. In the former, McNeil plays a muted solo that effectively counters the buoyant melody.

Other tunes show a moodier side. "Know Your Limits" is set around a bass vamp that allows space for the horns to play around and over, while on "What Comes After" they have long, sustained lines. The two group improvisations show a sense of humor and use of extended techniques to draw sounds from their instruments.

On *This Way Out*, McNeil runs the gamut from spacious and introspective to tightly wound, feel-good romps, showing why he has been so active and respected for so many years.

This review originally appeared in [AllAboutJazz-New York](#).

~ [Sean Fitzell](#)



Track Listing: 1. "Mi Tio" (4:14) 2. "A la Orilla" (6:45) 3. "Picasso View" (Gorka Benitez) (2:54) 4. "My Taxi" (5:13) 5. "Last Minute" (6:40) 6. "What Comes After" (4:48) 7. "Because of You" (Benitez) (5:11) 8. "Know Your Limits" (6:28) 9. "Skeeter" (Art Lande) (3:49) 10. "West Coast Memories" (1:32) 11. "Dewey Defeats Truman" (2:50) 12. "Flor de Viento" (Benitez) (3:50)

Personnel: John McNeil, trumpet; Gorka Benitez, tenor saxophone; Giulia Valle, bass; Joe Smith, drums, percussion.

Style: Modern Jazz/Free Improvisation

Review Published: April 2004

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