

John McNeil **[This Way Out](#)** **(Omnitone) 🎧**



If there is a candidate for album of the year (2003), it is surely [This Way Out](#). Trumpeter **John McNeil** traveled to Spain to record this quartet, with two Spanish musicians (tenor Gorka Benitez and bassist Giulia Valle) to craft a recording of genius, international fare, and exemplary jazz.

If there is an undercurrent of Espana, this is no [Sketches of Spain](#). Flamenco and Spanish motifs are the undergirdings to expansive, expressive improvisation, but improvisation that generally returns to roost at a recognizable structure. At times sounding of Miles' mid-sixties quintet (with the occasional Lester Bowie smear on the horn), on occasion at the pointillistic end where Anthony Braxton can be found, and generally cooking, [This Way Out](#) is indeed a way to "out[side]" jazz, the way out of the jazz/music doldrums, and indeed "way out" music. Way out, and always peculiarly, invitingly melodic.

When the horn and brass speak in euphony there is almost a scent of Davis' late fifties triumph—but that is only one of a thousand influences. And the particular magic of McNeil and partners is that they don't just hit every one of those influences—they make them part of a breath-taking whole. Check out the fiery exchange of four and then two bar lines on the CD's opener; the haunting melody of the finale; the drum beat cadence of the bull fight matador's march; the abstract, pulsing intro to "Picasso's View" that magically forms a vivid image (as if Picasso traveled in one painting from cubism to a realist panorama, only to slowly unresolve again); the third world flavors that have not been evoked so well since Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra.

Four musicians, way, way out. This is as unique and continually satisfying as any recording in recent years.

— JULES EPSTEIN

Release Date: 2 September 2003

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1. Mi Tio / 2. La Orilla, A / 3. Picasso's View / 4. My Taxi / 5. Last Minute / 6. What Comes After / 7. Because Of You / 8. Know Your Limits / 9. Skeeter / 10. West Coast Memories / 11. Dewey Defeats Truman / 12. Flor De Viento

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