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Ratko Zjaca – (g)
John Patitucci – (b)
Steve Gadd – (dr)
Stanislav Mitrovic – (saxes)
Randy Brecker – (tr)

RATKO ZJACA CONTINENTAL TALK

(In+Out Records /in-akustik)

Surpassing boundaries, building bridges, bringing people together. It is clear from the biography and discography of the brilliant Croatian guitarist, Ratko Zjaca, that he is very much driven by these concepts. Earlier CDs are called Crossing The Border and The Bag Is Packed and, meanwhile, flights between Zagreb and New York have become a comfortable routine and English the predominant language. Ratko Zjaca stands as a symbol of the ongoing evolution of American classic jazz as it increasingly becomes a country-uniting form of communication.

No wonder, then, that Ratko has named his debut album for In+Out Records Continental Talk. The dialogue between the new and old world is functioning much better. With him as moderator, far fewer conflicts arise than is the case on political platforms. A bilateral exchange without pre-conditions and prejudices, in which the string sorcerer is on the same level as accomplished artists such as trumpet player, Randy Brecker, bassist John Patitucci and drummer Steve Gadd creates a new aesthetic of improvisation. "Two years ago, when I recorded Crossing The Border with John, and shortly afterwards started to play live with Randy and Steve, I knew instantly that I wanted to do my next recording with them," said Ratko. The decision to realise this project came about when he was on a plane with his friend and saxophone player, Stanislav Mitrovic. "It was a case of small talk above the clouds, between America and Europe. Which is the reason the CD is called Continental Talk."

Quite early in Ratko Zjaca's career, there were vivid indications of his extreme global yearning. After completing his classic studies at the University of Zagreb, the highly talented

guitarist attended the conservatory of Rotterdam, where he plunged himself head on into the world of modern music. He attended master classes as well as individual lessons given by Joe Pass, Jim Hall, Pat Metheny, Mick Goodrick, Mike Stern, Bob Brookmeyer and John Abercrombie, at the same time dedicating himself to the study of composition. After Rotterdam he attended the New York University School of Music. Soon the young Croatian had gained the status of being something of a secret weapon on strings and he won the recognition of famous colleagues, not only in the USA but also in Europe. He worked with such great artists as Benny Bailey, Gary Peacock, Reggie Workman, Al Foster, Miroslav Vitous, Ron Carter, Jimmy Cobb, Alvin Queen and Adam Nussbaum.

For his dream ensemble, the heroes of his youth, Zjaca wanted to write music that was perfectly fitting. He says: "This was extremely simple, considering the line-up. An almost natural process, an organic symbiosis". This symbiosis continued during the session. Zjaca, Brecker, Patitucci, Mitrovic and Gadd merely had to look at each other, giving a short nod, and the creative energy poured forth like a lava stream. Only one take was required for each one of the twelve titles. Every band member was receptive to the impulses of the others and was immensely communicative. "I never wanted an album for my ego," said Ratko Zjaca. "My intentions were, first and foremost, to achieve an exchange at the highest level. And this actually worked! I cannot possibly describe how much we enjoyed this moment. But it can be heard, it sounds so obvious and pure. I have never felt better during a recording session." And he was never better than on "Continental Talk".

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