



PRESS RELEASE



RATKO ZJACA
TOUCHING MINDS
IOR LP 77161-1



SIDE A

1. Touching Minds (4:03)
2. The Life Ahead (4:22)
3. Dharma (4:28)
4. The First Prayer (6:13)

SIDE B

1. The Story Of Us (4:52)
2. Here Nothing Begins (6:16)
3. Liberation (6:15)
4. Horizons (For Carlo) (4:42)

Ratko Zjaca - guitar
Marius Preda - cimbalom, piano
Nick McGuire - bass
Trilok Gurtu - percussion

RATKO ZJACA TOUCHING MINDS (IN+OUT Records)

As a follow-up to 2023's sumptuous solo guitar triumph, Archtop Avenue, his tribute the Great American Songbook, Ratko Zjaca is back with a very distinctive world music project that finds the Croatian-born guitarist and long-time resident of Rotterdam interacting with musicians from Romania, England and India. The results of his 18th outing as a leader or co-leader are staggeringly beautiful and full of improvisational daring.

Joined by Romanian cimbalom player Marius Preda, who is widely regarded as the world's first jazz soloist on that trapezoidal stringed instrument that is the distant cousin of a hammered dulcimer, along with British-born upright bassist Nick McGuire and the innovative, groundbreaking percussionist Trilok Gurtu, Zjaca and his interactive crew strike an uncanny accord on the eight delightful originals presented on *Touching Minds*.

"I've known Marius for a long time," said Zjaca. "We had been talking for years about playing a tour together and finally the opportunity presented itself last year when we had a 10-day tour as a trio. After those concerts, it was clear to us that we should document the collaboration on my next album."

With Zjaca bringing in all the compositions and Preda doing the arranging, they recruited McGuire, who Ratko has known since his student days, for his rock-solid fundamental bass work. They next brought in Bombay-born Gurtu, an acclaimed master of the tabla who has also developed an abundance of chops over the decades on a hybrid drumming kit he designed and pioneered through his collaborations with John McLaughlin, Joe Zawinul, Bill Laswell, Jonas Hellborg, Jack Bruce, Terje Rypdal, Oregon, the Arkè String Quartet and many others. Throughout *Touching Minds*, Gurtu brings the groove while also coloring the proceedings with nuanced shadings. "He's my favorite percussionist on the planet," said Zjaca. "I am a big fan of Indian music, and I studied Indian music at the academy (Rotterdam Conservatory) for a while. I wanted a new sound for this album and the tabla and cimbalom together moved it all to a new spectrum. And when you have

two of world's best players on their respective instruments, which Trilok and Marius are, you have some very special ingredients to make some incredible music. And it's extremely inspiring to play when you have guys of that caliber next to you."

While Zjaca may have soaked up the influences of countless guitarists he has listened to and emulated at different times over the years, from Joe Pass and Jim Hall to John McLaughlin and Pat Metheny, he described his guiding principle throughout *Touching Minds* as: "I play what I hear and what the music asks of me at that moment."

"Marius's unique approach to Ratko's compositions creates an experience that transcends conventional boundaries."
Arturo Sandoval

"This recording confirms a unique vision of great and creative musicians going forward and presents its own personal style. Keep going Ratko!"
Reggie Workman

"Touching Minds" is like a breeze of fresh mountain air."
John Riley

