

TRIPLICATE

ABOUT THE SONGS

1. BEMSHA SWING

Written by drummer/composer, Denzil Best (who also wrote the bop classic *Move*) and pianist/composer Thelonious Monk, this classic represents the type of piece our trio often chooses to relax and settle in when we play. Not originally intended for our CD, it was the first song we played at our initial recording session, when our engineer, Matthew, asked us to play something for a “line check” after he miked us up. It just clicked and felt so good, we decided to keep it and place it right where we started — “from the top.” About Monk: here was a man so far ahead of his time, it’s really beyond conversation.

2. NOSTALGIA IN TIMES SQUARE

Like Monk, Charles Mingus is certainly another one of our musical heroes. This song is one of the very oldest in our band’s repertoire. Classic recordings of this song are mostly up-tempo, with a driving swing reminiscent of the Ellington or Basie sounds. We found that slowing the tempo down a bit makes the melody even funkier, which we decided to explore by incorporating a looser rhythm and blues groove, highlighted by the riff that frames the melody. The way it all fell into place very naturally probably accounts for the fact that this arrangement is always a crowd pleaser when we perform it live.

3. YOU DON’T KNOW WHAT LOVE IS

Before he would perform a ballad in concert, the great tenor saxophonist, Dexter Gordon, created a striking figure standing outside the spotlight in the darkness. Lighting a cigarette, then holding his horn horizontally with both hands up, as if in offering, he would recite a lyric from the song he was about to play. You can picture him setting the mood for this piece, one of the saddest of all love songs: *You don’t know what love is / until you learned the meaning of the blues / until you loved the love you had to lose / you don’t know what love is.* We blend a combination of Joel’s classical guitar work in the intro, with a mix of African, Brazilian and Cuban rhythmic lilt by Dave & Pooch throughout the body of the piece, to color the mood of the song and perhaps ease a bit of the heartbreak of the sentiment.

4. WEBB CITY

Named, presumably, after the little Missouri town located on the famed Route 66 — or was it dark humor regarding his own state of mind? We play this piece in the spirit of its composer, pianist Bud Powell, who personified the unrelenting sense of urgency and ferocity that is synonymous with be-bop. Joel enjoys the challenge of applying the horn-friendly, up-tempo Bird-like lines to his guitar, just as Powell did to the piano when he defined the way post-swing era pianists would approach the instrument forever after. The bass and drums breakdown, where Pooch and Dave trade eights over the AABA form, was directly influenced by the spirited work of Charles Mingus and Dannie Richmond, trading fours over blues form, on the song *So Long Eric*, from Mingus’ classic *Town Hall Concert* recording.

5. BLUES FOR BUHAINA

One of our original pieces, Dave’s composition is dedicated to Pittsburgh’s own Art Blakey, who took the name Abdullah Ibn Buhaina, after studying religion in Africa. Blakey found his true calling forming his hard bop ensemble, The Jazz Messengers. He not only innovated several playing techniques on the drumset that are now standard in the jazz idiom, but literally breathed new life and longevity into the art form by nurturing a few generations worth of young jazz musicians. To hear Freddie Hubbard, Wayne Shorter, Branford and Wynton Marsalis, and many others who passed through his ranks, speak of Blakey, is a true measure of his greatness on and off the bandstand and how deeply he is missed.

6. TONES FOR ELVIN JONES (INTERPOLATION: FOUR STICKS)

This composition by guitarist John McLaughlin, originally appeared on his 1996 recording, *After the Rain* — an album dedicated to the great tenor saxophonist John Coltrane, performed with Coltrane’s premier drummer Mr. Elvin Jones. The title has humor, as it is a take-off on the classic Chick Corea composition, *Tones for Joan’s Bones*, but there’s nothing tongue-in-cheek about the playing. We added Led Zeppelin’s *Four Sticks* to the picture to provide counterpoint to Dave’s drum solo. Blending a classic Zeppelin work with a “jazz tune” might seem a bit odd to some perhaps, until you consider that Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page was a student of McLaughlin’s. We took the signature riff from that tune and just repeated it throughout the drum solo, modulating it along the chord changes of McLaughlin’s 8 bar song form, and had a ball.

7. LAMENT

Exemplary, haunting music by J.J. Johnson, who is not only a truly prolific composer of many jazz standards, television and motion picture scores, but also an instrumentalist with the musical and technical prowess of bop pioneers Charlie Parker and Bud Powell, on a truly formidable instrument — the slide trombone. Although quite a success in his field, he has never received the recognition he truly deserves. A trombonist himself, Pooch pays homage to a great influence with his bass, taking the lead, playing the melody and setting the tone for this dark and beautiful song.

8. CRESCENT CITY STRUT

This piece was written by trumpeter Jamil Sharif, who comes from a proud and strong musical family heritage and has recorded with Crescent City stalwarts such as the Neville Brothers and Wynton Marsalis and played featured solos on Dr. John’s Grammy award winning recording *Goin’ Back to New Orleans*. Dave and Jamil became friends working together on Caribbean cruise ships. The original recording of this song, on Jamil’s first album, *Portraits of New Orleans*, is up-tempo and more traditional in the spirit of King Oliver and Louis Armstrong. We decided to play it the other way — slower and lazier, in the spirit of latter-day influences like The Meters and Professor Longhair, for that swampy-hot weather kind of vibe that goes good with a cold beer. Learn more about our man, Jamil, at his Web site: <http://hometown.aol.com/JShare1/index.htm>.

9. THIRD WIND

Another of our original works, Dave sees this one as the musical equivalent of an oncoming relentless storm — dark and heavy, putting you in the eye of the hurricane as personified by his drum solo. Pooch’s bass solo, lets you feel the tension of “the calm before...” Joel’s tone adds greatly to the overall mood of the piece, and supports the philosophy of the great Tony Williams who remarked that he disliked the term “fusion.” “I prefer the term jazz-rock,” Williams said. That’s where it’s at on this one, blending a mixture of a Monk-ish and *ESP*-era Miles Davis-style rhythmic-melody vibe, with alternating broken and driving rhythm work, and the aggressive, cutting guitar. Hang on for the ride.

10. SWEET AND LOVELY

A good time to open up our sensitive side and just play pretty. This is an old standard, dating back to a 1944 MGM musical called *Two Girls and a Sailor*, which apparently was not as memorable as the song itself. Though we never actually heard them play this one, our role models for the vibe on this track were the members of a version of the Ray Brown Trio that featured pianist Gene Harris and drummer Jeff Hamilton. All men of great musical taste and personality, rolled into a hard swinging ensemble. At least we know our mothers will like this one.

11. MAKE UP YOUR MIND

The closer of this musical journey is the last of our original compositions, this one written by Pooch. We jokingly refer to this one as “the opera” because of its length and the rather involved arrangement it presents. Beginning rubato and becoming a waltz, it employs such devices as metric modulations, between 3/4 and 4/4 time, as well as style changes from 6/8 Afro-Cuban feels, to straight-ahead jazz, before it ends up becoming a relaxed medium blues where we all take our time and stretch out. After hearing it, Pooch figures you’ll be able to guess the meaning of the title.