

JEFF DENSON
"OUTSIDE MY WINDOW"
Ridgeway Records – RRCD009
Release: May 4, 2018



Jeff Denson –
Vocals & Double Bass
Dayna Stephens –
Tenor, Soprano & Baritone
Saxophones & EWI
Kari Ikonen –
Piano, Fender Rhodes & Moog
Ronen Itzik –
Drum Set

1. **GRACE** 6:32
electronic / acoustic – unique instrumentation
2. **IN YOUR EYES** 5:43
slow ballad painfully sad intro up
3. **FOR A BRAND NEW DAY** 8:17
snare march, bowing bass, "cage has no doors, only rusted bars" – I like
4. **HAVE WE REALLY GONE THIS FAR?** 4:11
Fun – circus, discombobulated I like
5. **THROUGH THE MIST** 5:50
Latinesque, atonal – I like
6. **BIRD ALONE** 6:12
bass solo opener, voice, cymbal, piano slow ballad
7. **FELL ON BLACK DAYS** 7:13
interesting timing
8. **OUTSIDE MY WINDOW** 4:01
blues – I like

Jeff Denson performs not only double bass but also vocals on his 12th release as leader/coleader. **Outside My Window** visits four recognizable songs (by Jeff Buckley, Peter Gabriel, Abbey Lincoln, and Chris Cornell), and presents four original compositions by Jeff himself. Surrounded by seasoned players and improvisers, this latest CD will please both "old timers" and "newcomers" alike. *Outside My Window* is slated for release on May 4, 2018.

The album is built on some of his deepest musical relationships. Denson met **Dayna Stephens** at Berklee and have played together in various contexts ever since. Israeli-born drummer **Ronen Itzik**, also a Berklee alum, bonded with Denson as part of the rhythm section for Joe Lovano's 21st Century Ensemble. They played together regularly and recorded three albums in two years with pianist Bill Peterson and one with vocalist Inga Swearingen. **Kari Ikonen**, one of Finland's most highly regarded jazz musicians, is a recent addition to Denson's musical world, but he's quickly become indispensable. Denson initially hired Ikonen for a tour with legendary alto saxophonist Lee Konitz, and "it was joyously apparent to me that along with Ronen, this was my trio. It felt easy and inspiring and the next few tours I did with Lee Konitz were with them."

Denson's arrangements of songs by other artists don't reimagine the pieces as much as filter them through his subtle sonic palette, starting with a gorgeous, lapidary version of "Grace." He delivers a sparse, intensely poignant rendition of Abbey Lincoln's "Bird Alone," a re-harmonized

6/8 version of Peter Gabriel's "In Your Eyes" and a riveting arrangement of "Fell On Black Days" by Chris Cornell, a piece that serves as a tribute to Soundgarden's vocalist. "In my mind, he's arguably the best voice of that rock/grunge generation," Denson says. "I wanted to pay tribute to him and his artistry."

Denson's four original pieces stand up impressively next to his interpretations, from the Beatlesque optimism of "For A Brand New Day" to the clangy prepared-piano accompaniment of the anguished "Have We Really Gone This Far?" On a melancholic piece that feels like it beamed in from a universe neighboring Miles Davis's *In a Silent Way*, Denson contributes an atmospheric wordless vocal on "Through the Mist," a tune he's radically rearranged since the collective trio Minsarah introduced it in 2006. The closing title track is a wistful invitation into Denson's verdant musical world.

Mr. Denson's premiere release on his own label, **Ridgeway Records**, came in 2012 with the critically acclaimed *Secret World*. Since then he has released his own albums as well as appeared on others', including *I'll Fly Away* featuring pianist Joshua White, *Two* (improvised dialogues with Swiss clarinet virtuoso Claudio Puntin), *The Jeff Denson Trio + Lee Konitz, Standards Live: At the Village Vanguard*, and last year's Sgt. Pepper tribute *May I Introduce to You* with the collective San Francisco String Trio.

Originally from Arlington, VA, Denson graduated Magna Cum Laude an MM in Jazz Studies from Florida State University. He currently resides in the Bay Area and teaches at California Jazz Conservatory. A prolific composer and arranger, he's written music for an array of jazz settings, as well as for string ensembles, solo bass, and chamber opera.

He's brought his many pursuits under one umbrella with the recent unveiling of Ridgeway Arts, a non-profit designed to enhance and fortify the Bay Area scene, and to make a strong contribution to the national landscape of jazz and the arts in general, through a four-pronged plan of expression, education, presenting and documentation. He introduced the initiative with *The Jeff Denson Trio + Lee Konitz*, and followed up with *Arctic* by drummer Alan Hall's critically hailed electro-acoustic ensemble, Ratatet. The label has become an essential conduit to an international cast of musicians, and the portal to Denson's multifarious musical imagination.

"Artists are always dreaming up what we're doing," he says. "My goal has always been very clearly to create my own musical world."

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