

Three Story Sandbox

Artful Dodgers is the result of what happens when “critical mass” meets opportunity — in this case, the chance to add a critical component at just the right moment to an already potent entity.

Three Story Sandbox, with guest artist, violinist Mark Feldman, reprises the inventive and delightfully musical free improvisation heard on its debut release *Three Story Sandbox* (Tall Grass Records, 2016). That project followed the highly-acclaimed *Snakeheads & Ladybugs* (2014), a brilliant album of improvised duets by two master jazz musicians, drummer **Jack Mouse** and multi-instrumentalist **Scott Robinson**. Equally adept at all styles of the jazz genre, their musical rapport is vividly captured.

For *Three Story Sandbox*, Jack and Scott added vocalist **Janice Borla**, describing her as having the musical knowledge, technique and comprehension of abstract concepts — traits possessed by the great master instrumental improvisers. The result was an album hailed as captivating, powerful, compelling, visceral and inspired, and a *DownBeat Magazine* Editor’s Pick.

The current release *Artful Dodgers* expands the trio to include guest artist **Mark Feldman**. A violin virtuoso, Feldman is known for his adventurous, genre-bending work in the worlds of jazz, improvised music and 20th century contemporary music. The addition of Feldman’s violin here exponentially expands the range of sonic possibilities and interactions.

The album’s title refers to the nickname of a young pickpocket in Charles Dickens’ novel *Oliver Twist*, a scamp and rascal known for his playful skill in deftly evading obstacles, inconveniences and other challenges, skills which also come into play in free improvisation. The overarching premise of the album is to make improvised music that sounds written — to create a spontaneous, conversational, yet organized interplay of sounds.

Interplay is on radiant display throughout this album. The tracks offer a variety of settings — duets, trios, quartets — which comprise a broad array of textures and a full emotional palette, from exuberant joy to beguiling aural imageries. Jack’s total percussion mastery demonstrates his skills not only as an intuitive compositional soloist but also a sensitive, conversational accompanist. Scott’s impeccable abilities and limitless creative imagination shine on tenor and slide saxophones, bamboo flute and East Indian gobichand. Janice freely exploits the full range of her vocal capabilities as if another instrumentalist, with consummate artistry. Mark’s technical brilliance on violin yields a gorgeous sound and a passionate, often fiery playing style.

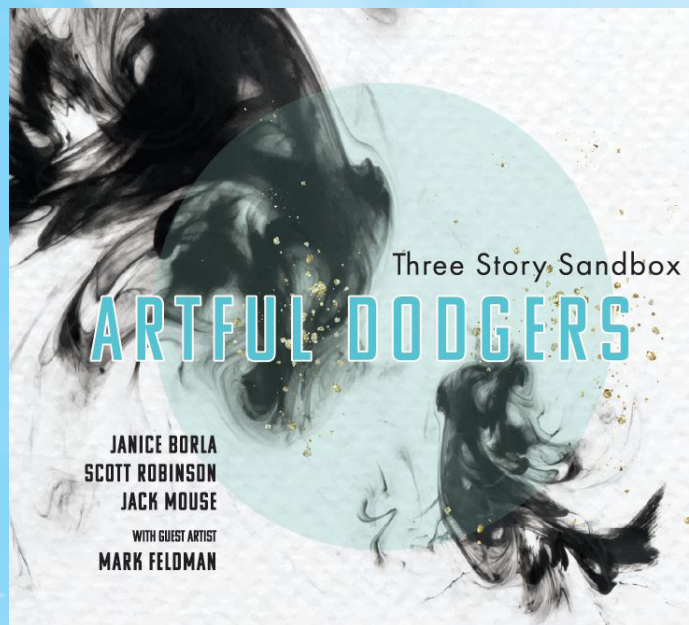
The album opens with “**Twin Rivers**,” exuberant interplay between Scott and Jack that conveys the seminal essence of the album, like two rivers running parallel but only a few miles apart, sharing the same climate, topography and destination, separate yet together. On “**Kalahari Crossing**” Mark and Janice set a tone of expectation in an opening free exchange, as Jack leads them to embark on a spirited and richly-delineated African jaunt. On “**Slip ‘n’ Slide**” Scott introduces the distinctive sound of the slide saxophone, one of his many rare instruments, here in a lyrical duet with Mark. “**Brush Dance**” features Janice’s voice in a playful, blues-tinged duet with Jack’s innovative brushwork, highlighting an artistic rapport honed over four decades of making music together and calling to mind the Jon Hendricks/ Max Roach duet on George Russell’s classic *New York, NY*.

On “**Kamakura**,” bamboo flute and Japanese percussion evoke a haunting soundscape of the ancient capital of Japan, while voice and violin render complementary melodic lines intuitively referencing the 5-tone Hirajoshi scale. “**Second Line Strut**” is an abstract tip of the hat to what might be perceived as a futuristic version of a New Orleans second line parade rendered by Mark, Jack and Scott on tenor. “**Tears for Ukraine**” emits anguish, turmoil, terror, chaos, impending destruction — man’s inhumanity to man — channeling the horror experienced by the courageous people of Ukraine. “**Outback Inn**” invokes the primal terrain down under, triggered here by Scott on gobichand and Jack’s handwork on the drum set, and realized by Janice’s deft vocalizations.

“**Birth of a Rainbow**” is a stunning duet of sensual poignancy that captures the consummate artistry of Scott and Mark. “**Artful Dodgers**” is a rambunctious, full-throttle collective improvisation by the quartet. “**Slapshot**” reveals Jack and Scott having fun on tenor and Slaperoo. On “**The Other Side of the Moon**,” Scott’s slide saxophone and Janice’s alluring vocals exploit the intuitive bond between them to conjure up an otherworldly mood. “**Fiddle Sticks**” is a high-spirited exchange between violin and drums. (What else would you call it?)

When so much of what is called “free Jazz” is unstructured, chaotic, discordant and often unaccessible, the music on *Artful Dodgers* is in fact uniquely accessible. Each of its thirteen pieces is crafted to convey a mood, ambience and compelling atmosphere that makes each one a story unto itself. Despite the total spontaneity and freedom involved in making this music, it is powerfully structured, totally cohesive, richly musical, vividly virtuosic and absolutely enjoyable on every level. Another masterful recording by Three Story Sandbox.





1) Twin Rivers (tenor saxophone – drum set)	3:22
2) Kalahari Crossing (voice – violin – drum set)	4:30
3) Slip ‘n’ Slide (slide saxophone - violin)	3:35
4) Brush Dance (voice – drum set)	2:36
5) Kamakura (voice – bamboo flute – violin – assorted Asian percussion)	5:30
6) Second Line Strut (tenor saxophone – violin - drum set)	4:04
7) Tears for Ukraine (voice – slide saxophone – violin – assorted gongs)	7:38
8) Outback Inn (voice – gobichand – drum set)	5:10
9) Birth of a Rainbow (tenor saxophone - violin)	2:00
10) Artful Dodgers (voice – tenor saxophone – violin – drum set)	2:39
11) Slapshot (tenor saxophone - Slaperoo)	2:23
12) The Other Side of the Moon (voice – slide saxophone)	2:49
13) Fiddle Sticks (violin – drum set)	3:58

Janice Borla: voice

Scott Robinson: tenor saxophone - slide saxophone - bamboo flute – gobichand

Jack Mouse: drum set – Chinese opera gong – Japanese hyoshigi – Sabian Zodiac gong – Sabian thunder sheet – Sabian tam-tam – Japanese dencho bell – Slaperoo slapstick

with guest artist

Mark Feldman - violin

co-producers Jack Mouse & Janice Borla

cover design Ying Chen, ycArt Design Studio

Recorded by Steve Yates at Tall Grass Studio, Naperville, IL, April 12, 2022

Mixed & mastered by Steve Yates at Steve Yates Recording, Morton Grove, IL

Jack Mouse plays Yamaha drums, Sabian cymbals, Aquarian drum heads and Vic Firth sticks and mallets exclusively

Scott Robinson plays Vandoren reeds and mouthpieces

J-Squared Music BMI

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Website: jackmouse.com



Press and Radio Contact:



706.993.2223

kari@karigaffney.com

www.karionproductions.com

One sheet by:

