

ALEX WEITZ

Saxophonist and composer Alex Weitz began his career in Arizona as a member of the award-winning Tucson Jazz Institute Ellington Band, versing himself in the music of its namesake and the classic repertoire of Count Basie. This foundation in swing distinguished him early on as an artist who knows that, to architect a sustainable future, one must mine raw materials from the past. Tapping the roots of tradition in the Southwest gave him more than enough minerals to sustain his relocation to the Southeast, where he studied at the prestigious University of Miami Frost School of Music. While there, he completed his undergraduate studies in Jazz Saxophone Performance and graduate studies in Studio Jazz Writing, gaining invaluable mentorship and experience as a member of the Henry Mancini Institute Jazz Septet under famed trumpeter Terence Blanchard.

With Blanchard's encouragement, Weitz strengthened his personal voice, and then some, emerging from the Miami program with an in-depth knowledge of composition that imbues his originals with robust, memorable melodies and structural integrity. The classical rigor of those melodies is just as evident in the way he improvises around them.

Since graduating, Alex's primary musical focus has been on performing, composing, and producing music with his ensemble, the Alex Weitz Group. March of 2013 saw their debut release **Chroma**, and after a long-awaited return his sophomore record **Luma** is set to be released in February of 2017.

Weitz has been invited to appear at such topflight venues as the Kennedy Center with Betty Carter's Jazz Ahead, the Monterey Jazz Festival with the Frost Concert Jazz Band, the Arsht Center with George Benson's "Inspirations," the Tucson Jazz Festival with Jimmy Cobb, Gusman Hall with Jeff "Tain" Watts and Dave Liebman, the Azamara Journey as a member of the Journey Orchestra, the Telluride Jazz Festival with the Telluride Youth All-Stars, and numerous local venues with his own group and as a sideman.

In recognition of his excellence, Weitz received *DownBeat's* Outstanding Undergraduate Soloist award of 2013, as well as recognition from ASCAP as an outstanding young jazz composer, and in 2014 his original "Song for Peace" was featured as the theme song for the Swedish documentary *Bettan's Taxi*.

The upcoming year is already looking to be a breakout one for Weitz, and with the release of **Luma** it's only a matter of time before discerning ears will awaken to his unmistakable voice.





Luma may be Alex Weitz's second album as leader, but it's also a first for signaling new directions in the Miami-based saxophonist and composer's creative sound. From its predecessor, 2013's **Chroma**, which by its visceral explosion introduced the jazz world to a genuine talent, **Luma** recalibrates those youthful energies through an introspective grammar that belies his 25 years. Plying a distinctly original trade, Weitz proves himself to be a performer and composer of immense depth, maturity, and, above all, poise.

Did You Know kicks things off with panache by luring us into the album's decidedly cinematic atmospheres. Here, Weitz and his sidemen show us the rewards of patience in their downright visual feel for melody. Pianist Tal Cohen, bassist Ben Tiberio, and drummer Michael Piolet build on their longstanding friendship, which translates into a uniquely synergistic rapport in the studio.

The organic care with which the quartet approaches this and every tune that follows is what glues the album together out of seemingly disparate parts. Whether in the driving energies of **Outer Noise** or the legato poetry of **Let It Go**, Alex and company show remarkable willingness to follow every narrative element to its logical end. But where the bandleader truly sheds his age is in the balladry of the album's title track. **Luma** is an astonishing duet with Cohen at the keyboard. Its brooding intimacy finds likeminded sentiment in **Equilibrium**, which plays more freely and primes plenty of canvas for the band to paint.

Weitz's two-part **Song For Peace** is another highlight, not least of all for revealing deep classical influences in his work. Here the theme takes inspiration from the Romantics, building increasingly complex structures on a lyrical foundation. **Azalea**, by extension, is an impressionistic gem, more Debussy than Duke. The album closes with the aptly titled **Reminiscence**, which begins reflectively but gives way to some bursts of color from Piolet at the kit, thereby showing the breadth of Weitz's penchant for taking giant steps of his own into and beyond the stratosphere of his own vision.

Like the best ensemble casts, Weitz and his crew present us with a full-blown narrative that is warm and timely for its early spring release. And while it is a follow-up, **Luma** is that rare sequel for expanding its origin story to unusually inevitable degree. Chalk this up to Weitz's ability as a curator of emotional impressions, as a writer of songs without words, and as an artist who creates as of a way of intuiting what lies ahead.

Alex Weitz: saxophone
Tal Cohen: piano
Ben Tiberio: bass
Michael Piolet: drums

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| 1. Did You Know 8:56 | 6. Luma 4:51 |
| 2. Outer Noise 6:01 | 7. Equilibrium 7:21 |
| 3. Song for Peace Pt. 1 8:26 | 8. Azalea 6:21 |
| 4. Song For Peace Pt. II 5:06 | 9. Reminiscence 8:12 |
| 5. Let It Go 5:12 | |

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Website: www.alexweitz.com
Available at all fine retailers



Press Contact:



706.993.2223
kari@karigaffney.com
www.karigaffney.com

Onesheet by:

