

JOE ZAWINUL OM LELO NIKA

“... this guy, Lelo Nika, is the greatest accordion player who has ever lived. This guy, he's the greatest virtuoso who has ever lived. He is a gipsy, he's from Belgrad, who grew up in Copenhagen... one day, i was playing in Copenhagen and he came in and wanted to play something for me. And we sat in a dressing room, a small dressing room, and he started a sad play, and i never in my life heard anybody playing like this. So we said “OK, we make a little project” - it was incredible, with the band as special guest, incredible, ... this guy plays Paganini, you know... i never heard something similar in my life!”



Lelo Nika / Moving Landscapes

Lelo Nika is a world champion. His title is genuine, and he won it fair and square at a competition in the German city Klingenberg. Lelo was happy just to be there and show that things could be done differently. So when he reached the finals, he was satisfied. He played Paganini very fast – light, flying and elegant. As always, Lelo Nika played like music is a party. And that is how he became world champion.

Lelo Nika is 38. He was born in Nikolinci, 80 km. from Beograd and close to the Rumanian border. In 1970, when Lelo was one year old, his family moved to Denmark. He comes from a family of musicians – his father, grandfather and uncle all played – and played well enough to make their living at it. Lelo Nika has played since he was a child. It has been said that he was born with an accordion in his hands, and the statement has never been disproved.

School in Denmark was not easy for Lelo, so at the age of ten, his family sent him back to Nikolinci to live with the man who had been his father's musical teacher and mentor. He stayed there for three years. It was hard, and he was alone, but he learned a lot. Among other things, he learned discipline and respect. His thirst for the music of the Romas was quenched. Since then, Nika has earned a conservatory diploma, although he didn't really need it. But, as he says, he is a gypsy and, 'gypsies don't go to school. That's why!'

Lelo Nika leads his own band with a passionate touch of gypsy music. He has released several records, and performed with

many popular artists. He became known in jazz circles as a member of Bo Stief's One Song and Dalia Faitelson's group. He has also performed with Joe Zawinul. In Sweden he has worked with the Norland Opera's Symphonic Orchestra and in many other contexts.

From a base in Serbian and Rumanian music, he has moved toward a universal musical language in order to pass on to audiences what he feels is important, and to find his personal musical idiom. According to Nika, music doesn't have to be perfect technically. What's really important is, that it has spark and the will to communicate. There must be a little madness, says Lelo. 'I will never forget where I come from, the folk music, but by now, I have played so long that it is much too easy to follow the beaten path. I can't just stay in one place and play safe. I need to shake myself. Music knows no boundaries, and I want to develop and explore the world. I want to create something new all my own.'

That is exactly what he does on MOVING LANDSCAPES, his first time as lone decision maker. With him are some of the best musicians on the Scandinavian scene: Anders Banke on saxophone, bassists Tommy Andersson, Andrzej Krejnuik and Moussa Diallo, guitarist John Sund, drummer Martin Andersen, and the classical pianist Niklas Windeløw. His daughter Manuela Nika plays violin, and clarinetist Bibescu from back home dropped by. And many others – the line-up changes from tune to tune. It is hard to find a label that fits the music. Some might call it fusion... others something completely different.

We know that Lelo Nika is a tornado on his instrument. We know that he can embellish the music of others. We know that he masters almost every style... but who is Lelo Nika really? Perhaps this CD answers that question. Surrounded by some of the best musicians that Scandinavia can muster, Nika darts in and out of a musical Babylonian Tower from mood to mood – but always with one common denominator: his impressive, virtuosic and inciting accordion playing.

Lelo Nika has moved in many musical circles, however he is always himself regardless of the context. Lelo is Lelo, and it is important to him that he does it well. This is music that had to come out.

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