

MILES JASON MILES

MILES TO MILES In The Spirit of Miles Davis biography

JASON

Of all the music you will hear today, this month, or even next year, MILES TO MILES stands alone. Its funky, edgy grooves and angular melodies hearken back to something heard in 1986, but now it's nearly 20 years later, and MILES TO MILES is new, exciting, and different. The production is expansive, the arrangements embrace exotic world music tonalities and rhythms, and the music itself features some of the hottest names jazz has to offer. The man who constructed this dynamic sonic palette? His name is Jason Miles.

Jason Miles – producer, arranger, keyboardist, and synthesizer programmer. He has crafted music for Luther Vandross and Gato Barbieri, and has helmed ambitious musical tributes to both Weather Report (CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF WEATHER REPORT) and Ivan Lins (A LOVE AFFAIR: THE MUSIC OF IVAN LINS, from which the track *She Walks This Earth* (Soborana Rosa) featuring Sting won a Grammy® for Best Pop Male Vocal). In 2001, Jason Miles produced TO GROVER WITH LOVE, the acclaimed and visionary tribute to saxophonist Grover Washington, Jr. More recently, he masterminded the contemporary jazz collective Maximum Grooves, which released its debut COAST TO COAST in early 2004.

Of all his career highlights, the one that resonates most in Jason Miles' mind is his work with the legendary trumpeter Miles Davis. Davis was and is more than a musician; he is an icon, a spirit whose singular influence continues to loom large over the world of jazz. Stories of Davis' intense personality, appetite for both life and self-destruction, and continuing search for new musical vistas have kept him in the minds (and music) of musicians and fans for generations.

In the late eighties, Jason Miles was tapped by his friend, bassist and producer Marcus Miller, to assist in building the adventurous sonic landscapes that would become the backbone of Miles Davis' 1986 release TUTU. Davis, characteristically looking to reinvent his music, was searching for something new and different that would again push his music into uncharted territory. He was astounded by Jason Miles' ability to craft dramatic soundscapes and orchestrations on the synthesizer, which at the time was far less common a creative tool than it is today.

"I hold an interesting place among the musicians Miles worked with," explains Jason Miles, "because he could tell a horn or guitar player that he was out of tune or behind the beat, but synthesizer programming was a new art, and it was something Miles – and most people – didn't understand. When I met him, I told him I could make any sound he heard in his head happen. We came up with sounds that no one had ever heard before, with samples, panning, and all types of orchestration. We pushed everything we knew as far as we could take it."

As with most musicians who have crossed paths with the legendary trumpeter, Jason Miles' time with Davis continues to inspire much of his subsequent work. It is no surprise, then, that TUTU's other-worldly production values, daring sound samples, and push-the-envelope creativity are the spring-board from which MILES TO MILES is launched, taking the ideas pioneered in 1986 to fresh and exciting echelons.

MILES TO MILES, however, is *not* a tribute record. Far from it. "This music is real, it's now, and it's dangerous," says Jason Miles. "When we made TUTU it was about taking sound to the next level. MILES TO MILES takes it one step further. I thought about what Miles would be digging on today, and tried to capture a bit of his creative, renegade spirit in the music."

The opening cut, *Ferrari*, says it all. The title comes from Davis' love of fast cars, and from Jason Miles' recollection of a particular high speed drive up the Pacific coast with the trumpeter at the wheel. The energetic rhythms capture Davis' velocity as a driver and his voracious search for uncharted musical territory. Saxophonist Michael Brecker adds an angular melody line over the electronic funk that singularly captures Davis' restless intensity, while DJ Logic's turntables add extra dimension and coloring.

Up next is *Butter Pecan*, a reminiscence of Davis' legendary sweet tooth. On one occasion, Davis requested Miles' wife to bring butter pecan ice cream to his home, against doctor's orders. The track features an overdubbed saxophone section courtesy of Gerald Albright, and a solo from Davis' former live synthesizer player Adam Holtzman. Then comes *Guerilla Jazz*, featuring the late saxophonist Bob Berg (a childhood friend of Jason Miles), along with trumpeter Tom Harrell and bassist Me'Shell Ndege'Ocello. The track's strident melodies remind the listener that they too must go beyond the tried-and-true and search the musical underground if they wish to discover bona fide cutting-edge sounds.

King of the Bling – well, almost any photograph will tell you that Miles Davis was king when it came to fancy clothes and radical styles. Drummer Carter Beauford of the Dave Matthews Band, and trumpeter Randy Brecker bring the track to life. Next comes *Bikini* and *Love Code*, both recalling Davis' legendary love of women of all sizes, shapes, and colors.

Flamenco Sketches, the Spanish-influenced song first heard on Davis' classic 1959 release *KIND OF BLUE*, follows. It is the one *KIND OF BLUE* track that does not often get covered by other artists, and a favorite of Jason Miles. Pianist Keiko Matsui, trumpeter Barry Danielian, and guitarist Marc Antoine are featured, and both are afforded an artistic freedom that allows them to stretch far beyond their usual smooth jazz forays.

Voices On the Corner (featuring P-Funk keyboardist Bernie Worrell), *Street Vibe*, *Suba*, and *New World* follow, each telling their own story of the Davis vibe. "Miles loved listening to the sounds of the street, and he loved Indian music, anything with tablas," recalls Jason Miles. "These songs are my version of Miles' vision. When you play music with people, you don't focus on their looks or nationality. You see the person at their most pure, their most emotional. Every combination of background and nationality works, and Miles could appreciate that. He could see inside a person, to their most pure elements. That's what I tried to do here."

And what of that title, *MILES TO MILES*? Therein, too, lies a story. "*MILES TO MILES*," explains Jason Miles, "comes from the first time I met Miles Davis. He drew a little stick figurine on a pad in the recording studio, and was going to throw it out. I asked him if I could keep it, and he asked for it back, and inscribed it 'Miles to Miles' with a little trumpet. I've still got it to this day."

As a friend and collaborator with Davis, Jason Miles has stories to tell. Some people write books, some tell their stories to their circle of confidants. Jason Miles is a musician. He makes music. *MILES TO MILES* is a collection of stories and recollections of Miles Davis, as only Jason Miles can tell them.

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