



P.O. BOX 60220
PALO ALTO, CA 94306
650.858.0264
edmundjohnson@sbcglobal.net
WWW.EDBJOHNSON.COM

ED JOHNSON — WHAT THE PRESS IS SAYING

...about The Other Road

JazzTimes Review, May 2008

Weird, but this guy with the name Ed Johnson composes some of the finest Brazilian music in the world from his home base in Northern California. It just goes to show that the world-wide reach of the bossa nova style popularized by Antonio Carlos Jobim, João Gilberto and Baden Powell has never lessened and infiltrates all corners of the globe. The joyful and romantic strains of bossa nova are what Johnson co-opts so well with his eight-piece Novo Tempo.

Johnson even possesses the Milton Nascimento/Ivan Lins sweet falsetto, which he showcases on original tunes like "Song For My Daughter," "Behind The Fire," and "Katrina," as well as on those mixing English and Portuguese, including "Shipwrecked (Naufragado)" and "Chorar." But Johnson's real strength comes with his vocalese—no translation needed—especially when working in tandem with pianist Jennifer Scott on "Samba 2 Tom" and "Clean Up." Although Johnson of course works the nylon string with lyrical ease, Scott Sorkin's plugged-in accompaniment and Scott's piano solo give tunes like "The Other Road" a delightful Metheny-esque touch.

Pacifica Tribune, January 15, 2008

**Brazilian magic at the Sanchez
with Ed Johnson and Novo Tempo
By Jean Bartlett ARTS CORRESPONDENT
Article Launched: January 15, 2008**

Legendary Bay Area guitarist, composer, vocalist and arranger Ed Johnson, whose teachers have included vocalist Bobby McFerrin, is playing Saturday night at Pacifica Performances Sanchez Concert Hall with his top notch Bay Area ensemble Novo Tempo.

The band who previously delivered the 2004 critically acclaimed CD "Movimento" (Johnson-composed bossa novas written in original bossa style) went back into the recording studio to pump out the October 2007 Brazilian-fused release "The Other Road" which has critics racing for superlatives.

ED JOHNSON, PRESS REACTIONS, continued

Along with Johnson on vocals and guitar, Novo Tempo's rich musician lineup consists of: Jennifer Scott on piano and vocals, John Worley on trumpet and flugelhorn, Kristen Strom on sax and flute, Scott Sorkin on guitar, Rene Worst on bass, Jason Lewis on drums and Michalle Goerlitz on percussion.

"What is great about this group of musicians is there is a tremendous amount of mutual respect and love for what each of us brings," said Johnson. "There are always a lot of wonderful surprises when we play because we have the ability and the trust to take off and go in any direction. The ensemble centers around the sound, but the collective and individual talent is just so well suited to the material that it makes each song, that much better." Johnson and Novo Tempo will be playing songs from "The Other Road." With the exception of the partido alto samba "View from Above," written by guitarist Sorkin, all songs on the CD were composed by Johnson. There is an energy samba tribute to Jobim called "Samba 2 Tom" with Ed and Jennifer weighing in towards the end on sweet vocal scatting. The reggae-infused "Katrina" co-written with Lissy Abraham is already climbing the charts on the national airwaves. "Chorar" (to cry), with additional Portuguese lyrics from Lucy Carter, is a ballad that opens up the stage to showcase the gift of Worley on flugelhorn. The title tune "The Other Road" is a samba in three. And there is of course, more.

"I describe our music as Brazilian inspired and influenced and I think there is an expansiveness to our sound," said Johnson. Brazilian critics are calling his sound "authentic, before the Tropic lia Movement introduced rock into the sambas and bossas of Jobim and Sergio Mendes."

Born in San Francisco, raised in Palo Alto, Johnson's road into the life of a musician was a natural progression. "I don't know why I chose it but in third grade, I started on the E-flat alto horn. Then I started playing French horn in 5th grade. I also took up piano in fourth grade. Of course those were the days when schools had thriving music departments."

There was also a lot of music in Johnson's house. His mom often played piano and sang standards. Sometimes his dad would 'scratch' along on the fiddle or the ukulele. There was always somebody practicing an instrument or the record player was going.

"When I was pretty young, my older brother really planted a lot of seeds by introducing me to jazz greats like Miles Davis and John Coltrane. He also had some Antonio Carlos Jobim and that really caught my ear. I learned to never really reject anything first time hearing it."

When Johnson was a sophomore in high school, he started playing electric guitar. His inspiration was the Beatles. In his senior year he heard a friend playing classical guitar and he wanted to sign up for that and did. Electric guitar changed to nylon string classical and then to acoustic steel string.

"I was part of a folk duo in high school," said Johnson. "We played at a place called The Tangent in Palo Alto and a couple of other little clubs up and down the Peninsula. I was really into singing and that's when I started to develop my voice more. I always sang as a kid but when my voice changed, I suddenly had a range of about six notes. But since I

ED JOHNSON, PRESS REACTIONS, continued

wanted at that time to be a combination of John Lennon and Paul McCartney; I learned a ton of their songs to improve my voice. Also, playing the French horn really taught me to support my vocals."

Johnson also started composing in high school. "I went back to the piano and started writing small, jazz-oriented ensemble pieces. Then I started to write songs in my late teens with guitar and those were of different genres such as R&B, acoustic, folk and pop. My early passion for Brazilian music just kept growing and that really became a life long passion. I love studying it and the feelings that it brings up in me."

"The thing is, the Brazilian language is so musical, so when it is sung, there is nothing quite like it. The country with all of its volatile history has given birth to incredible music and art and literature. There are unique modes of expression in Brazilian music that are so different from anything else."

If you like the early rhythms of bossa nova and samba, if you like a musician's passion for harmonies which definitely celebrate the sounds of Brazil, and if you like songs with words to make you think and dream, then see you Saturday night when Ed Johnson and Novo Tempo climb onboard the Sanchez Concert Hall stage.

THE OTHER ROAD

Ed Johnson & Novo Tempo | Cumulus (2007)

by Michael P. Gladstone, AllAboutJazz.com

It has been three years since *Movimento* (Cumulus, 2004), the last album from singer/guitarist Ed Johnson & Novo Tempo, and the wait has been worth it. *The Other Road*, from this San Francisco Bay Area ensemble, evokes vivid memories of Brazilian samba and bossa nova music before the Tropicalia Movement introduced rock music into the menu of the first wave of bossa singer/songwriters in the early 1970s. At the same time, despite numerous re-awakenings of acoustic samba music, where does one have to go to hear some examples of this genre?

Johnson & Novo Tempo's music may seem retro to some, but to those who still actively admire the music of artists including Jobim, de Moraes and Powell, that music serves as a springboard for the original compositions of this group. On *Movimento*, Johnson wrote seven of the ten tunes, but goes the full route with *The Other Road*, writing all save for one from guitarist Scott Sorkin. Johnson's music is what Sergio Mendes began in the mid-1960s with Wanda de Sah and Marcos Valle, and then plateaued into a world of pop covers.

The album begins up-tempo with a frevo-style samba. On both "Samba 2 Tom" and "Clean Up," Johnson and pianist Jennifer Scott provide harmonized vocalese to keep the infectious melody going, with occasional statements from trumpeter/flugelhornist John Worley and

ED JOHNSON, PRESS REACTIONS, continued

soprano saxophonist Kristen Strom. There are seven English language songs and two that are delivered bilingually in Portuguese and English, as well as some with a repeated Portuguese refrain.

Johnson's high range on *Movimento* was reminiscent of Milton Nascimento, and is even more evident on much of *The Other Road*. On several of the English songs it is easy to hear the comparison with Nascimento's soaring style, while Johnson's vocal register on songs including the balladic "Song for my Daughter," accompanied initially by acoustic nylon-string guitar, recalls the range of Jobim and Joao Gilberto. Still, on the title tune, Johnson and Scott again leap into vocalese with Strom's simpatico flute solo.

"Chorar," with additional Portuguese lyrics from Lucy Carter, offers Johnson on a ballad that could be performed successfully in a non-bossa setting. Worley's showcase flugelhorn solo fits perfectly, with Johnson's Portuguese conclusion providing the icing on the cake..

Hurricane Katrina and what came afterwards has provided the inspiration for a lot of music, but recently composed lyrics expressing the frustration of the event and it's aftermath are less common. Johnson's "Katrina" could easily serve as a substitute to Randy Newman's already overplayed "Louisiana 1927." Taken at a misleading mid-tempo bounce, the words belie the rhythm with such thoughts as "...No shirts, no shoes, no service/No place for the weak and the poor/No more saints, no more sinners, just losers, some winners/And you wonder why we sing the blues..."

Track listing: Samba 2 Tom; Clean Up; Pacifica; Song For My Daughter; The Other Road; Chiquito; View From Above; Chorar; Katrina; Shipwrecked (Naufragado); Bolero: Solo a Vivir; Behind The Fire (only to live).

Personnel: Ed Johnson: guitar, vocals; Jennifer Scott: vocals, piano; Kristen Strom: woodwinds; John Worley: trumpet, flugelhorn; Scott Sorkin: guitar; Rene Worst: bass; Michaelle Goerlitz: percussion; Mark Ivester: drums; Jeff Busch: percussion.

OCTOBER 2007

Ed Johnson & novo tempo – THE OTHER ROAD:

"Brazilian music has been an addiction of mine since the early 1960's, when I first heard Jobim and the Getz/Gilberto collaborations. Naturally I was quite eager to give Ed Johnson's new project THE OTHER ROAD a listen when it arrived in my mailbox. I'm extremely pleased to report that it has quickly become a current favorite in my player. This Palo Alto, California native has assembled an impressive band of musicians here to support his brilliant guitar and vocal artistry, and together they absolutely nail the great vibrancy, romance and beauty of this amazing music. Mr. Johnson puts it succinctly when he says, "...I constantly strive to pay homage to the music that has inspired me over a lifetime..." He succeeds glowingly on this, his fourth solo album. All songs are originals, composed all or in part by him and members of his band. The moods range from the soft and sweet "Song for

ED JOHNSON, PRESS REACTIONS, continued

My Daughter" and "Chorar" to the unbridled exuberance of "Samba 2 Tom" and "View from Above," the latter tune written by electric guitarist Scott Sorkin. In keeping with Mr. Johnson's theme of "roads taken, roads left behind, and roads that diverge," the lyrics on some material have bite and astute social commentary, with titles such as "Katrina" and the anti-war "Bolero: Solo a Vivir." Taken as a whole, Ed Johnson & Novo Tempo's THE OTHER ROAD is a completely entrancing journey into all that makes Brazilian music so timeless and captivating. I love this album!"

—**Scott O'Brien, smoothjazz.com**

SEPTEMBER 23, 2007

Ed Johnson & novo tempo – THE OTHER ROAD:

"Good Gourd—a-mightee, talk about "verve"... I imagine it's the heavy Latino influences on the opener, "Samba 2 Tom", that make it feel so energetic, but the CD is "pitched" as "Brazilian jazz", & wears that theme well! The title track is more like a "dance tune", slow & smooth... conveys the sweet joy, to be sure, especially about a minute in when Ed's guitar kicks in – but it's actually the 6:43 "Katrina" that sneaked up on me & made it my absolute favorite track on the album! I suspect that has something to do with the vocals (I believe that's Ed, not positive, since I didn't see anything on the liners to that effect), but the jazz organ, fine percussion & trumpet by John Worley probably had a lot to do with it, too. What I enjoyed most about this first listen to Ed's work is the unquenchable thirst for many different styles of music it inspires... I haven't heard another artist this versatile the whole year of 2007. If you want boring old standards, with little originality, & the "same music all over again", do NOT COME HERE! I am strongly impressed with all the original tracks on this album, & excited to discover a player with such musical fire! "The Other Road" is a grand sonic adventure that gets our MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED rating! Get more information on his website, & be sure to tell him Zzaj sent you!"

—**Dick Metcalf, aka Rotcod Zzaj, Zzaj Productions, Mililani, HI**

SEPTEMBER 10, 2007

Ed Johnson & novo tempo – THE OTHER ROAD:

"...warm vocals and velvety backing along with piano, trumpet, soprano sax and percussion...sophisticated and harmonious jazz pop in an extension of the work of Burt Bacharach with some very clear references to Antonio Carlos Jobim, Hermeto Pascoal and Milton Nascimento.

—**Marc Nolis, MazzMusikas Free-zine, Belgium**