

It was 1993, 15 years out of college, running out of steam, a make-or-break year. I had released my debut album 'Sentience' in 1986, retooled a bit and came back for the second 'Subtle Truth' in 1991. Learning from all the little mistakes made the first time around, this one had all the glitches fixed, ready to do it right.

The plan was to take a step up out of the NYC underground (where everyone loses money while trying to build visibility) to the first rung of the grass roots market. You can't do the pole vault over the missing rungs in the ladder of success with any reliability within NYC itself; you have to reach out of town to a regional market, make a name for yourself out there, and if you can do that then come back in at the low rung of the professional market. The strategy was to aim for colleges within a day trip of NYC, where I lived, for concerts in campus auditoriums and concert halls. I had the touring resources in place, the recent recording, the band that performed the recording, PR firm, we were set. Just book the gigs for the '93-'94 school year and hit the road.

Alas, in the early 90's there was a tough recession, and the colleges were still hurting with reduced concert schedules and no room for a DIY upstart trying to break through. Bad timing. By the end of the summer of '93 it was clear: not gonna happen this cycle. Would it ever? The Magic 8 Ball sez: Reply hazy, ask again later. Sorry, that's not good enough this time. Being in perpetual limbo ultimately is not a sustainable lifestyle, and I just couldn't push it another cycle. Time to save myself and throw in the towel.

So then, what do you do with all of those resources you saved up for touring? It's obvious: you produce one last show with all of the bells and whistles, a final hurrah for posterity before heading off into the sunset of avocational music making. And thus emerges: Last Chance Jazz.

Kampo Cultural Center was a very cool multipurpose performing and production facility, with a performance space, video editing suite, and audio recording studio, all wired together and stocked with current technology. My engineer/producer David Stone had been using the audio recording studio for a lot of work in recent years, and alerted me to the capabilities of the space. It was perfect, and I booked it. I had met Paul Kovit, a fine guitar and mandolin player, playing with Margo Hennebach, but his day gig was in video production. He'd helped produce a video brochure for me the previous year and was beginning to get editing jobs following that. David holed up in the recording studio, and Paul directed the video crew from the editing suite. I hired three camera operators, and we did a multi-channel audio recording, mixed live to stereo, and a live video mix from the three cameras.

Our drummer, Tom Nazziola, was unavailable for this gig, but he referred me to a friend of his, Rich Mercurio, who turned out to be a fabulous, artistic, and sensitive musician. Rolf and Mike were both available and with about three rehearsals to get 12 tunes together after a considerable break in performing, we got it into shape. I invited 65 of my closest friends and family to fill the house, and we had the celebration that you hear here. I made a few copies of the video for family and production participants, but otherwise put it on the shelf. I really did move on, until this year. After remastering my

two albums two years ago and releasing them digitally for the first time, it was finally time to recapture this recording and make it available.

This was a live mix, and so it compares to a studio "rough mix" from an initial track-recording session -- not perfect in every detail, but David is an excellent engineer and he's pretty darn close. Since there are no overdubs on a live performance, the band is no closer to perfection than he. This reflects the event as performed and recorded in the moment, and I chose not to discard that authenticity to construct some sort of fiction from the multi-track tapes. Joe Tarantino has taken this slightly rough-hewn source and tweaked it into more polished shape like the master mastering engineer that he is, so it is presentable for your enjoyment instead of your frustration. The perfectionist in me will just have to sit down and shut up this time around.

Of the 12 tunes, 7 were originals, and four of those were from my album 'Subtle Truth' (ST) -- the other three were newer compositions, never before (or since) recorded. This is their first release, 20 years later. These 7 tunes comprise the album. The others will await a time when mechanical licensing is set up for on-the-fly accounting for DIY-ers, but that isn't here yet.

I started with the original set order so as to recreate an approximation of the original arc of music, but in the process of removing the 5 covers it made sense to do a couple of minor switches to keep the music varied and flowing. Here's how it goes now:

Underway: This tune was written in 1991, around the time I was recording ST. It was an exciting time, filled with promise and energy, and the tune reflects that trundling momentum in the opening bass line. I wrote the tune with this specific band in mind, composing melody and harmony lines that, together with the bass line, defined a full tonality for the tune without requiring anyone to play a rhythmic chordal part. This is real polyphony, until the modal solos start. I anticipated recording this tune for the next album -- as it turns out, this is that album, finally.

Walden: One of the four tunes on ST, this was written in 1980, following a visit to the Walden School summer music camp (at the time in Vermont, later moved to New Hampshire) where my good friend and pianist Gary Monheit was on the faculty after having been a camper when he was younger. It was an inspiring place, with musical creativity swirling all around, and the reverberations stayed with me for weeks after I returned home. This lilting jazz waltz was a direct result of the inspiration that I took from that visit, and it deserves to be recognized as such. This arrangement is unique in that it begins with rubato statement of the melody on the bass, with guitar filling in chords (and bass also supplying the tonic notes along with the melody -- not an overdub).

Night Sea: Also from ST, this is a short ABA-form head with a relaxed latin texture and a mixture of alternating lydian and minor modes -- this tune reminded me of a few days in midsummer on the shore of the Adriatic along the coast of Croatia, where I had the pleasure of sitting on the beach in the warmth of the late evening, with the slow undulations of the never-ending waves lapping up on the shore. Relax and let your mind wander.

Hot Shot: This was written in 1986, the year I released my debut album. Fusion was still big then, and this tune was a contribution of mine in a funky 6-meter playing around with syncopations and counter-rhythms. It was a fun tune that I'd never recorded, but it was in the band repertoire at this point. It was time. There is a modal jam in the middle where Mike gets a chance to stretch out and Rolf stretches in support, but really, this tune is mainly about the composition.

Spirit Dance: Another from ST (and previously on the debut), this is a mostly 5-meter tune with a sense of dark mystery and deep-rooted spirituality, perhaps a hint of eastern influences. I considered this one of my most distinctive tunes, and it has stayed with me for many years. The concert would not have been complete without it.

Release Me: Written in 1992 (and premiered in this concert), in the thick of uncertainty surrounding the touring project, the very essence of being between a rock and a hard place with time running out. A slow, helpless, quasi-catatonic ballad -- envision the artist lying on the floor, spread-eagled on his back, searching for a way out of involuntary suspended animation. This is also the only tune I've ever written as a complete chord-melody for solo 5-string bass, which is how the arrangement begins, before bringing in sax and guitar to play melody and chords the second time around.

Jewel: This was the closer on ST, and it deserves that position here as well (though the original concert had two subsequent closers: first 'Silent Window' by former colleague Matt Balitsaris to end the second set, and then a solo performance of 'Round Midnight' as an encore). A soft glistening ballad, the image that came to my mind in naming this tune was three-fold: a large precious stone displayed in a gallery under multiple spot-lighting, rotating slowly on a circular base; a sweet newborn baby sleeping soundly in deep nighttime; or the bright twinkling star shining in through the window. Founded on a light lydian harmonic foundation and sprinkled with ringing open-harmonics chords on the bass, this is a moment of perfect repose, with only a hint of darkness threatening to impose itself at the start of the B section (perhaps uncertainty about the future?), yet ultimately set aside for the time being. If this tune leaves you feeling centered and balanced at the end, then I've done my job.

—*Dan Krimm, August 2013*

