

Interview Marco Mezquida ▶ The 38th edition of the International Jazz Festival will perform

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The Andorra Escaldes-Engordany International Jazz Festival returns in its 38th edition full of energy with a program full of proposals, all equally attractive. A wide range of styles and sensibilities with an eclectic generational mix of top-notch vocalists and instrumentalists who will make us enjoy borderless music from June 30th to July 6th with nearly twenty performances. EL PERIÒDIC has had the opportunity to interview one of the artists who will be part of this luxury poster. This is Marco Mezquida, the Menorcan pianist and composer who will present on this occasion his new album *Letter to Milos*, a work he has produced and recorded with the same trio format as his latest works *Ravel's Dreams* (2017) and *Talisman* (2019), with Aleix Tobies on percussion and Martín Meléndez on cello. In this last work a deeper course can be appreciated, with more peace and a slower tempo; in fact, it's like a new statement of principles on stage.

–Is this your first time in the Principality?

–No, I did a couple of concerts three or four years ago, before the pandemic, with other groups. I have very good memories because they were outdoor events, on very nice nights, and the reception was very warm and friendly. So now I really want to land again in this small country with a group of mine like this trio, and presenting our latest project, *Letter to Milos*, which is a very expressive as well as virtuoso music. I hope the reception is very positive as the next day we are with Silvia Pérez Cruz and the band, which also promises to be a very special evening.

–You have recently become a father and this album is named after your son Milos. How has fatherhood affected your creation and your life as a musician?

–It has been another dose of vitality, responsibility, joy and all these feelings are reflected in the music. I've done a lot of songs inspired or dedicated to my little one, and I feel that more than saying that it has changed my life, improved it, made it even more beautiful, more intense, and certainly my vital rhythm of concerts it has not diminished, quite the contrary. So, I'm traveling a lot with him, having some very endearing experiences with this little new roommate who is only a year old. In fact, I will come to Andorra with him and my partner after having already taken him to many countries: Bulgaria, Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy and all of Spain ... In a year he will have taken more than sixty flights. Fatherhood for me has not been an impediment to continuing my profession normally, I have been able to combine it to move with him, as I do not want to miss days of his life.

–In this project you explore new paths and sounds. Could you tell us what they are?



Marco Mezquida

Pianist and composer

«I am a free musician of the 21st century»

–Basically we try to enhance all the timbre capacity, which is not small, with this trio of great musicians. With them we find a lot of influences ranging from Iberian sounds – there is a theme we play that is a tambourine suite with which we pay tribute to this instrument, which is found mainly in the Iberian music of Salamanca and then it has transformed and has been part of the various Iberian cultures – to references to Mediterranean music, as well as Arab, Turkish, Balearic, jazz influences – with the color palette that brings this style, while free improvisation –; there are also songs that are very warm and like meditative; these are sounds that explore all the timbre capabilities of a trio that has many potential paths. The album delves

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«The power of music in education is underestimated, and I consider it crucial for children to gain awareness»

into the playful spirit in a work that contains pieces that evoke traditional Iberian music with a certain taste for musical syncretism: they relate Cuban sleep to Brazilian samba, with touches of romance but, at the same time, paying tribute to the free jazz, blues, circus music and groove.

–How is Marco Mezquida shown in this *Letter to Milos*?

–I feel that it is a more mature record than the previous one (*Talisman*), there is a depth, a warmth and other aspects that are a little more extensive, more expressive, wanting to transmit with the music a great joy, to enjoy it, to savor that it is full of life.

–Is it a leisure or a profession for you to play the piano?

–Good question. I think pleasure and passion for making music con-

tinue to prevail, but I have found a balance between the two factors; I enjoy creating music and sharing it, and it turns out that in the end I was lucky enough to become my profession. I didn't think about it, nor could I imagine it, but the truth is that in the last 12 years it has become my way of life, giving me the opportunity to travel around the world, do concerts and work on which I like.

-Do you improvise on stage?

-Of course. There are concerts where I just improvise. For me it is a fundamental game or exercise that gives more personality to my music. Sure, there are acts where we bring a skeleton of songs, a repertoire, and we base ourselves on that scheme, but I always try to have something improvised.

-You have a very varied musical background, jazz, classical, romantic, modern music, folklore, traditional song, pop, rock, even flamenco. Which style do you feel most identified with and why?

-I feel more identified with the field of jazz, because it is a music that uses a lot of improvisation from well-known, popular or Broadway songs, as well as because it uses a language that allows me to compose while creating my universe sounds from jazz that has influenced many other styles. This is basically because it is a modality that seeks communion with other musicians with a common language and where improvisation, which is this instant creation, becomes apparent in a fast and fresh way.

-You don't like putting on music labels, for what reason?

-My baggage is very wide and to be categorized in a specific genre, I consider it to be a little underestimated all my musical knowledge. I feed on a lot of different styles, I relate to different musicians, and each project has a unique sound and track, so I think the label is limiting. If I had to define myself in any way, I would be a free musician of the 21st century.

-What is artistic identity for you?

-To have your own stamp, have a recognizable sound, a way to identify yourself. It doesn't matter what kind of music you make or play, it's that it's recognized as yours, like when Picasso painted the Cubist style; that is, to have an identity on

a personal artistic level. Achieving this is a great thing.

-What is your way of working, what is your creative process like?

-The method is study, individual improvement, as well as living life and nourishing yourself with experiences and experiences that you can then extrapolate to music and a way of doing and creating. I'm not very disciplined, but somehow I'm always thinking about music or connected to it, and that keeps my concentration always awake, alert to everything going on around me.

-Do you currently think that music training is lacking in schools?

-Right now I am not very involved in the primary and secondary education system to give an opinion, but I know that in some schools subjects such as music, philosophy and the arts have been despised or relegated to the detriment of other subjects. This fact saddens me, because the power and need for music in education is trivialized and underestimated, and I believe that it is crucial for children to gain awareness and knowledge, as well as respect for music. We must be aware that music always makes us happier, but not only this, but also art, theater, dance, cinema ... All this should be promoted, taken care of, because they could be more enjoyed, and so that they could make us fuller and happier, no longer only in schools, but in life in general.

-Do you think that technique and emotion have to go hand in hand to be a good musician?

-Yes, technique is not enough; no doubt this must be at the service of art in different disciplines, but for me one can have a very great expressive and passionate capacity with a fair technique, the essential thing above all is that there must be passion, dedication and creativity. Great masters are those who strike a balance between perfect execution and emotion.

-You have defined yourself as a free artist of the 21st century, what does that mean?

-That I am free to create whatever I want; that I can do whatever I feel like with my music; that I do not have to answer to any label, nor the interests of any company, because I have self-published this work like others of which I have taken to



►► Marco Mezquida in a rehearsal.



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the market throughout my career. What I want to highlight with this idea is my search for this artistic freedom to be able to develop as a musician, to grow and to be able to produce different things.

-Would you like your son to follow in your footsteps?

-I would like the music to accompany him and make him happy. If you're into it, great, if not, so be it; what I would like is for him to be a sensitive person who loves music, because this is something wonderful, which has given me a lot.

-You have worked with many international artists, what do you think of the poster presented by the 38th Andorra Escaldes-Engordany International Jazz Festival?

-It's exciting as well as diverse. Personally I think it is very successful,

and I consider it a guarantee that it must be a great success, that attracts a diverse audience while curious to discover, get carried away and surprise, so I encourage Andorrans to enjoy this new proposal from a festival that also has a lot of history. I am convinced that every concert will be a pass. For me, it's a pleasure to share a poster with greats like Mario Biondi, Ron Carter or Silvia Pérez Cruz, among others.

-What would be your dream to fulfill?

-My dream was to be a musician and to be able to travel around the world with my songs and my creations; it has been fulfilled, and now my desire is to keep it so that I can continue to offer, as well as share everything that comes up in this great search for happiness and what makes me happy. ≡

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