

## THE JW3 LIVE AT THE LANGHAM



On his latest CD, the multi-talented John Watson covers a dazzling and diverse range of material that demonstrates his aptitude for choosing songs that allow him to showcase his improvisational skills. Recorded live at the prestigious Langham Hotel next to the world-famous headquarters of the BBC, the twelve-song set – which features Miles Danso on bass and Joe ‘JC’ Caddy on drums – runs the gamut from contemporary pop (Alicia Keys’ “If I Ain’t Got You,” faithfully recreated as a bluesy instrumental) to time-honoured standards (“Stardust,” given an appropriately intimate and ‘late night’ treatment).

John’s own original compositions – notably the finger-snappin’ “Basie Street” and the swinging “Definition Of Cool” – are among the standouts on the CD; finding new ways to interpret the works of Stevie Wonder (who recently witnessed John live after Wonder’s successful Hyde Park show, catching a final set at The Langham) with a new reading of “Isn’t She Lovely” (prominently featuring Danso) and Bill Withers via the pop/soul evergreen “Ain’t No Sunshine” is no easy task: Watson and co deliver tasteful versions of both tunes that aren’t mere instrumental replications of the originals.

John Lennon’s immortal “Imagine” is performed with tenderness while Norah Jones’ “Don’t Know Why” is particularly memorable for the soulful reading Watson offers. Those who like jazz with a swing will appreciate “I’ll Remember April” and in a nod to one of music’s keyboard giants, the trio pays respect to Dr. Billy Taylor via a lively take on his original composition, “I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free,” best known for the 1968 Nina Simone recording.

Having had the pleasure of seeing John live, accompanying Lee John in a jazz set at the New Morning club in Paris, I can attest to his formidable skills at the keyboard. His latest offering is a wonderful display of his deft musicianship, songwriting and ability to choose tunes that allow him to express his artistry.

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