

The Clarinet And The Oud



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The clarinet is hardly as an exotic instrument as the oud, but both instruments have their places in modern jazz and it's always fascinating to hear how each sounds within those contexts they're placed. As a point of comparison, the music on these two releases is at once haunting and comforting, mesmerizing and intoxicating, ultimately luring in a listener to experience musicianship as involved as it is ingenious. As a result, the records offer exposure to familiar strains set in often stark relief with unconventional textures, the novel contrast of which may eventually spur the musiclover to delve further into the utilization of all these instruments, featured and otherwise.



Francois Houle -Alexander Hawkins -Harris Eisenstadt:

You Have Options

[Songlines Recordings](#)

2018

Wielded by [Francois Houle](#) as he plays with pianist [Alexander Hawkins](#) and drummer [Harris Eisenstadt](#), the prominence of the clarinet on *You Have Options* is a welcome reminder of

the instrument's versatility. Original compositions from the trio's members surround selections by [Steve Lacy](#) ("Dusk"), [Andrew Hill](#) ("Art") and an improvisation on Charles Ives' "Largo," comprising an album recorded subsequent to live performances so mutually rewarding the threesome were compelled to work together in the studio. The airy but evocative atmosphere of the early tracks continues largely unabated for the near-hour total playing time, while plentiful space within the arrangements remains inviting rather than daunting for the duration as well. The expansive musicianship thus allows for poring over the project's backstory as outlined in the enclosed booklet, not to mention perusal of cover images that mirror the sounds inside.



Gordon Grdina's The Marrow
Ejdeha
[Songlines Recordings](#)
2018

Equally enthralling in their own way [Gordon Grdina](#) and his ensemble The Marrow are nonetheless much more assertive in their collective instrumental probing than Houle/Hawkins/Eisenstadt. Yet like that of its companion piece, the provocative playing on *Ejdeha* mirrors the graphic design of its digi-pak, presenting something of a Rorschach test for listeners upon which they can project, once seduced by the music on the CD. Along with cellist [Hank Roberts](#), bassist [Mark Helias](#) and

he of the exotic percussion, Hamin Honari, the leader utilizes his oud to meld a composite of the finely-woven timbres wherein the quartet actually renders the absence of space a virtue. The closely-knit interplay is a wonder to behold, even if it takes repeated hearings to fully appreciate its density, but the rewards multiply each time through, making every successive pass worthwhile.

Tracks and Personnel

You Have Options

Tracks: Clue; Art; Run Riot; The Pitts; Prayer; Advice; Largo; You Have Options, I Have a Lawyer; Le Concombre de Chicoutimi; Dusk.

Personnel: Francois Houle: clarinet; Alexander Hawkins: piano; Harris Eistenstadt: drums.

Ejdeha

Tracks: Telesm; Idiolect; Ejdeha; Bordeaux Bender; Wayward; Full Circle; Boubacar .

Personnel: Gordon Grdina: oud; Mark Helias: bass; Hank Roberts: cello; Hamin Honari: tombak, daf, frame drum.