



Princess Sita (2008)

Dominique DiPiazza |

By Phil DiPietro

With the release of this first “real” solo album, Dominique DiPiazza crowns one of the most remarkable jazz comebacks in recent memory. Seventeen years ago DiPiazza was tapped by guitarist John McLaughlin to take part in his still-evolving rotation of the world's greatest electric bassists. A year later, DiPiazza's career path diverged completely, only to be revitalized in 2000 with the release of the *Front Page* (Emarcy/Universal) collaboration with guitarist Bireli Lagrene and drummer Dennis Chambers. Increased live appearances and sideman activity followed, recently showcased in bass-centric circles by performances with McLaughlin's most recent discovery, Hadrien Feraud, on that bassist's self-titled Dreyfus Records debut.



DiPiazza continues a proclivity for working together with guitarists of all stripes in trio formats, continuing here with the incredible Nelson Veras. While DiPiazza is a French five-string electric bassist of Sicilian Gypsy descent, Veras is a French nylon-string specialist of Brazilian descent. Both are virtuosos of unequalled proficiency and liquidity sharing musical heritages placing great value on harmonic acumen coupled with brazen technique.

Although DiPiazza plays a more physically challenging instrument and thicker strings, he stands together with fellow gypsy Lagrene at the pinnacle of warp-speed arpeggiators, heard immediately on DiPiazza's version of “Nuages,” executed at a speed that most would think utterly impossible on a bass guitar. DiPiazza uses a transparent, woody tone and abets his prodigious right-hand technique with the addition of a banjo-style thumbpick used for all manner of beyond-rasgado picking techniques. What a foil DiPiazza would make for Paco DeLucia! Maybe some new prodigy will soon be able to execute something like this, but they'll never be able to come at it from as authentic a perspective as DiPiazza. DiPiazza is also a tone specialist, eliciting a thick fretless growl from fretted instruments by using a bridge of his own invention. “St. John” showcases this sound with a sinister loop supporting Veras' gorgeous melody and that staggering, more linear, single-note solo over the loop. Veras creates and resolves tension over this vamp at hyper-speed, indicating that, at the tender age of thirty, he's carved out a singular space for himself as an authentic jazz player exclusively on the nylon-stringed axe.

How dare they cut a tune called “Wake Up,” which basically takes their collective otherworldly chops quotient up by a power of ten. Abetted by Manhu Roche's ride cymbal pulse, DiPiazza's tensing with anticipation is palpable, as he supports Veras' spinning of line-after-line of flawless post-bop, until he bursts forward with his own volley of inside-out superimpositions.

Part of the jazz tradition involves recordings like this that change perceptions of proficiency. DiPiazza proves, with *Princess Sita*, that he will continue his track record of futurizing electric bass technique, while Veras places himself firmly in the vanguard of the world's finest guitarists. But songs like the final three, capped by Dominique's literal “Torrent D'amour,” rich in lyricism and attentive to dramatic arc, also make this one of 2008's essential releases.

Track listing: Nuages – Nemo - St. John - Wake Up - Princess Sita - Little Rose - Apres La Pluie – Desillusion – Dinello - Mr. PM - Recorda Me - Torrent D'amour.

Personnel: Dominique DiPiazza: bass - Nelson Veras: guitar - Manhu Roche: drums.

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