

## One-sheet - Midnight Apple

“*Midnight Apple* combines astonishing instrumental mastery with stellar arrangements.”

– *JazzCorner*

“An excellent jazz excursion”

– *Contemporary Fusion Reviews*

Artist-composer Clemens Grassmann draws inspiration from separate but connected sources of influence – past and present. His sophomore release *Midnight Apple* examines the broad bothness of his expression, identifying and exploring different dualities within his artistry that include harmonic tension and release, inhale and exhale of the triplet and, of course, the lineage and forward motion of the music. “The whole record mixes tradition with modern influences,” says Clemens, whose compositions create vessels for dual experimentation on *Midnight Apple*.

Clemens brings together an ensemble of artists who are expert at interpreting his musical narrative: Jernej Bervar and Yoav Eshed on guitars, David Milazzo on alto, Alex Madeline on tenor and Van Lier Fellow Nick Dunston on bass.

Dualism – and the idea of complementary soundscaping – emerges as a theme throughout the recording. Clemens’ compositions spotlight interplay among two saxophones, two guitars, bass and drums; when one voice expresses swells, ruminating on long tones and pads, the other responds actively, engaging rhythmic figures; a 2019 homage to the call-and-response tradition remains pervasive from one section to the next. “My goal was to create a new sonic experience with the instrumentation,” says Clemens, “honoring the traditions of the past while making the recording sound different from anything we’ve heard.”

Those connections reveal themselves differently from track to track. For the album’s title track, Clemens pulls close to literal inspiration from Ahmad Jamal’s “Poinciana,” then incorporating searing, distorted guitar lines as opportunities for experimenting with contemporary language and effects.

Conversely, he sets up an exuberant pulse for “On the Treadmill,” a tune he first conceived as a melody while he was in the middle of a workout. The melody emerged with an urgency, reflected in the composition’s tempo, and happened to fit perfectly over a rhythm progression. Evocative of a treadmill, rhythm changes’ “circular repetition” affords the ensemble an opportunity to flex their narrative development – and individualism as soloists – over a classic form.

Clemens features harmonic and textural dualism on “Sphere,” composing sections of counterpoint for the saxophones against ethereal guitar effects. Moved by the historical legacy of a single rocket departing from Earth’s atmosphere and entering outer space, he wrote a series of deceptively similar melodies, each with its own resolution. To capture the journey of a renegade rocket hit by a neutron star, Clemens transitions into a 9/8 section slipping in and out of pentatonic harmony – a musical comment on his own connection to the music’s broad lineage. “The rocket gets hit by different neutrinos – different influences – as it leaves Earth,” he says, “but yet, it still keeps the course.”

*Midnight Apple* resolves on “Mystic,” a composition for which Clemens had no actual resolution until recently. “I had the first section of this song for a while,” he says, “but I didn’t know how to finish it.” His decision to begin with an extended solo bass section and incorporate African-inspired feels reflects a deliberate choice to bring the entire recording back to the roots of the music and the lineage – leaving room to expand in different directions.

Enduring relationships – musical and philosophical – help Clemens weave an intimate and expressive narrative through *Midnight Apple*. For more information and to hear a preview of each track, visit [www.clemensgrassmann.com](http://www.clemensgrassmann.com).

## **Bio – long**

“Grassmann uses modern and clever textures to point the music into a creative direction.”

– *Jazz Weekly*

Recipient of the 2015 Armand Zildjian Percussion Award, Berlin-born drummer Clemens Grassmann has collaborated across the U.S. and internationally, releasing multiple recordings as a leader to critical acclaim and peer recognition. His genre-defiant aesthetic stretches across generations and unites listeners of every sonic prerogative.

The Berlin-born drummer, composer and educator has toured throughout the Southern United States as a member of the high-octane backbeat-driven project Swanky Tiger, whose recent EP Mechanical Nightmares received critical acclaim throughout the music blogosphere. Leading his own projects in NYC, Grassmann has headlined many noted clubs for emerging artists, including downtown venues Rockwood Music Hall, Gramercy Theater, Bowery Electric, Red Room and Pianos; Shapeshifter Lab and Williamsburg Music Center in Brooklyn; and Silvana and The Shrine in Harlem. He has appeared at legendary venues Minton’s Playhouse, Zinc Bar and Smalls Jazz Club, and has been featured at Olympiapark in Munich as an internationally recognized artist.

From meticulous tuning to loose, responsive phrasing, the 2017 Pueblo FX Featured Artist has spent the past decade developing every facet of his sound. Though he has lived in Brooklyn for nearly four years, Grassmann considers his time in Boston “life changing.” While studying at the prestigious Hochschule für Musik Carl Maria von Weber in Germany, he received a scholarship to attend Berklee College of Music in the fall of 2013. There, his opportunities multiplied and he channeled explosive curiosity into output. Pursuing his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Drum Set Performance, Grassmann explored a range of sound at the Berklee Global Jazz Institute from fall, 2014 through spring, 2016. Working cooperatively with Joe Lovano, John Patitucci, Danilo Perez, Ben Street, Terri Lyne Carrington, Dave Liebman and George Garzone, Grassmann became drawn to a dualism within the music – and himself.

Fundamentals handed down from instructors and world-renowned artists Ron Savage, Kenwood Dennard, Neal Smith, Billy Kilson and Ralph Peterson, among others, resonate across Grassmann’s expression. Sensitivity and a receptive, inclusive aesthetic allow him to take on diverse situations. He feels fortunate to have shared the bandstand with some of the music’s most inspiring voices, including John Patitucci, Victor Wooten, Lee Sklar, Steve Bailey, John Clayton, Dennis Montgomery III, Simon Shaheen, Vasilis Kostas and Ester Wiesnerova and to have recorded with such like-minded and distinctive artists as James Labrosse, Antonio Serrano, Clay Lyons, David Milazzo, Nick Dunston, Eitan Kenner, Yoav Eshed, Jernej Bervar, Leandro Pellegrino, Alex Madeline, Cosimo Boni, Xito Lovell, Daniele Germani, Giulia Malaspina, Olivia Perez-Collellmir, Negah Santos and Enrico Bergamini whose release *Out of Place*, that features Grassmann on drums, received a four-star review from All About Jazz.

Staying busy in Brooklyn, Grassman is headed back to the studio to record the upcoming release from his project Finding Thomas, following the single drop of “When I Close My Eyes,” available at [www.findingthomas.com/music](http://www.findingthomas.com/music).

Grassmann has enjoyed an extended association with Kuwaiti artist Yousif Yaseen, playing a critical role in his 2016 recording *Visions* – released in Boston and the Middle East – and performing sold-out shows during a two-week tour across the Middle East that included dates at The Corner’s Pub in Jordan and Yamouk Cultural Centre in Kuwait.

“My kind of guy for the future of jazz.”

– *Jazz Weekly*

“Grassmann performs accomplished and open-ended tracks which blur the lines between fusion, jazz, and pretty much everything in between.”

– *JazzCorner*

Grassmann’s compositions exist in two realms: one of intense, deliberate structure; the other, unbound exploration and spontaneity. Each of his recordings reflects a path through the lineage that begins where his heroes and mentors paved the way for his own generation to

experiment and explore. Following the release of his debut album *Labyrinths and Tales* (2017), Grassmann's sophomore recording *Midnight Apple* reimagines early call-and-response music, marches and spirituals to exist in the era of now, with help from some of the music's current virtuosos including David Milazzo and Nick Dunston.

Eager to help the generation behind him, Grassmann teaches varied levels of drums and percussion and has worked as Artist in Residence in both Boston and New York. He looks forward to 2020 collaborations, as he continues adding new dates to his tour schedule and new music to his original repertoire.

### **Bio – short**

“Grassmann uses modern and clever textures to point the music into a creative direction.”

– *Jazz Weekly*

Recipient of the 2015 Armand Zildjian Percussion Award, drummer-composer Clemens Grassmann has released multiple recordings to critical acclaim, including his latest, *Midnight Apple*. His genre-defiant aesthetic unites listeners, and he's headlined noted New York clubs Rockwood Music Hall, Bowery Electric and Shapeshifter Lab, also appearing at Minton's Playhouse, Zinc Bar and Smalls Jazz Club.

While studying at Hochschule für Musik Carl Maria von Weber in his native Germany, Grassmann received a scholarship to attend Berklee College of Music. There, he explored a range of sound with instructors Kenwood Dennard, Billy Kilson, Ralph Peterson, Terri Lyne Carrington, Danilo Perez and Joe Lovano, as well as peer artists David Milazzo and Ester Wiesnerova.

Grassmann feels fortunate to have shared the bandstand with some of the music's most inspiring voices, including John Patitucci, Lee Sklar and Victor Wooten, and to have recorded with such distinctive artists as James Labrosse, Antonio Serrano and Yousif Yaseen, with whom he performed sold-out shows across the Middle East touring Yaseen's 2016 release *Visions*. Grassmann looks forward to new collaborations, as he continues adding new dates to his tour schedule.