



Sambeat, Perico

Atlantis

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Perico Sambeat belongs to the jazz generation of musicians who became known in the 1980s, during the last great international emergence of the genre. In the Spain of the time, they made their way through with imagination and tenacity, and despite not being aware of it, they carried the task of normalizing the professional jazz scene in our country and strengthening the almost inexistent international links. What today seems fortunately normal, owes much to the enthusiasm of a few of those musicians, among whom Sambeat stands out.

I am not aware if Perico Sambeat, who will turn sixty in 2022, feels like a veteran or a pioneer, nor that it matters. His attitude towards music is still the same. He remains, in essence, the workaholic musician who dazzled his fellow Valencians and went first to Barcelona and then to New York to complete his training. His career since then has made him a highly requested and well-respected musician.

When playing, he is recognized after a few bars, like all great musicians. His compositions also have an air of family. And he has found a stable and solid reference in the trio he keeps with the double bass player Javier Colina and the drummer Marc Miralta, with whom he returns periodically for the joy of his followers.

Sambeat is a musician constantly concerned with innovation, that little bug that perhaps arrived in jazz when it ceased to be a folk music. Throughout the years he has tried different formulas and has been interested in other musics, but always being aware of whom he is and what he wants, without hesitation. In this framework, the most natural way to add nuances to his sound is to surround himself with new collaborators, and to confirm the essence of jazz as both individual and collective, full of borrowings and exchanges.

After a couple of more mainstream albums, Sambeat has taken a turn towards open territories. As open as the ocean that evokes the title of the album, under which the present Quartet was presented in 2019, after a first contact at a Jazz Seminar. Atlantis may also be a reference to the maritime link between the saxophonist and the rhythm trio. Almazán is Cuban; Menares and Recabarren are Chilean (although all three have relevant experiences in the American scene: the pianist as a regular performer for Terence Blanchard; Menares and Recabarren as members of saxophonist Melissa Aldana's band and other young musicians operating in New York). The quartet is the most recurrent formation throughout Perico Sambeat's career. This new twist shows him to be demanding and alert, happy once again to be at the starting line, as if it was his first time.

Concerned with details, the repertoire is a major issue for the saxophonist, who while conceiving the album, was missing a suitable theme to initiate the succession of atmospheres envisaged. One night, on his sleep, a melody came up on his dreams, and thus *Somnis* was born, a song with an oriental dance air of medium tempo, which could have drifted towards sweetness but the group assumes instead a certain exaltation and very underlined accents. Includes solos by Sambeat, Almazán and Menares.

Joe, dedicated to saxophonist Joe Henderson, appears on a CD that Sambeat recorded with Portuguese colleagues some years ago, but which was never released. It is an energetic composition, of Latin rhythm, with a brief introduction by the rhythm section and unison exposition of saxophone and piano. Sambeat takes the first solo in his most vehement style; then Almazán leaves snippets of Cuban music and baroque piano without lapsing into clichés; Recabarren closes the lineup of soloists.

Hiva is a mythical land from which, according to legends, the inhabitants of Easter Island originate. *Hiva's Trace* is a theme in ternary compass full of changing climaxes and very open harmonies, created from mysterious pedals. Sambeat presents the theme and begins his flute solo, although he then switches to the alto saxophone as the emotion increases, underscored by a rhythm of divergent, obsessive voices. The piano starts his solo based on chords, in a phrasing dominated by rhythmic interplay. Sambeat's clapping gives it a sudden flamenco flair; then it fades out enigmatically and the flute reappears until the closure.

Leviathan begins with a sort of bebop-like phrase, but immediately adopts a wilder path, almost similar to free jazz -in consonance with the sea monster's personality-, through which they allow to be carried away with a great deployment of resources. Almazán surprises, halfway through his solo, by recalling The Beatles' *With a Little Help from my Friends*. Let the quotation and the humor be welcome, now that they have almost disappeared from the younger jazz scene.

Ravel is one of Perico Sambeat's favorite classical composers; and when listening to *Forlane*, from Couperin's *Le Tombeau*, one can understand why. With a minimal adaptation, Sambeat manages to make the French Basque composer's piece sound like an elegant and harmonically seductive ballad. Here the order of the soloists is reversed and the piano paves the way for the saxophone; both of them are extremely lyrical, avoiding common paths. The trade winds set the quartet in motion again with a lyrical mid-tempo in 12/8 rhythm; the agitation then increases with *Rabbit Dust*, which suddenly kicks off with a solo saxophone line. This playful title track once again leads the listener through a succession of changing atmospheres and short rhythmic games that make the movement of the piece less predictable. Pablo Menares' closing piece, *Lem*, is a nice 3/4 that I suppose is a tribute to the Polish science fiction writer. After Sambeat and Almazán, Menares plays his most melodic solo of the album, letting the dark sound of his instrument shine without excessive fuss.

In this recording the listener can enjoy a very evident complicity between the four performers, as well as the continuous outpouring of talent and spontaneous flashes of creative brilliance, which grows with each new listening. In *Atlantis*, Perico Sambeat has undoubtedly taken an important step in his already long career. Hopefully the future holds new encounters between these musicians.

Jorge C

Vicente Sabater

Vicente Sabater

Maya Sambeat

Tracklist

1.	Somnis M: Perico Sambeat	06:35
2.	Joe M: Perico Sambeat	04:57
3.	El Rastro De Hiva M: Perico Sambeat	08:01
4.	Leviathan M: Perico Sambeat	05:11
5.	Forlane M: Maurice Ravel	06:30
6.	Alisios M: Perico Sambeat	07:45
7.	Rabbitt Dust M: Perico Sambeat	08:05
8.	Lem M: P.Menares	06:52