



THE RON JACKSON TRIO

"3 & 1/2 Stars"

DownBeat Magazine

Suzanne Lorge

"Guitarist Ron Jackson plays with the sterling technique and measured swing of a Tal Farlow or Bucky Pizzarelli."

DownBeat Magazine

Suzanne Lorge

"In Jackson's hands, these tunes remind us that yesterday's pop song is today's standard."

DownBeat Magazine

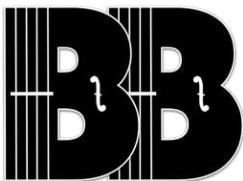
Suzanne Lorge

"Standards and Other Songs is a work of pure art... Ron Jackson's guitar shines like a brilliant jewel... This project is sure to be another successful musical notch on his leather guitar strap"

Musical Memoirs

Dee Dee McNeil

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"Standards and Other Songs is a solid piece of work that showcases the talents of master guitarist Ron Jackson"

Black Grooves

Brenda Nelson-Strauss

"Ron gets to the essence of each tune and communicates his sense of discovery and pleasure, as his trio explores the music without ostentation or extraneity"

Acoustic Guitar Magazine (May/June 2019)

David Lusterman

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"It's what he does with melody and structure that has me in awe... he's doing something incredibly difficult and incredibly different. He's completely fusing the components of jazz (finessing intricate, artful interplay, juggling divergent harmonies, relying on repetition and dynamics to make original statements) with pop (melody, catchy hooks, groove, the beat, the beat)... This is some deep, swanky jazz, helplessly lost in sweet, juicy pockets of pop."

Medium - Festival Peak
Carol Banks Weber

"Ron Jackson has a rich and warm tone... Casual coolness deluxe."

JazzWeekly
George W. Harris

"Seven-string guitarist Ron Jackson can always be relied upon to enchant with a purity of expression that takes full advantage of his chosen instrument."

The New York Jazz Record
Tyran Grillo

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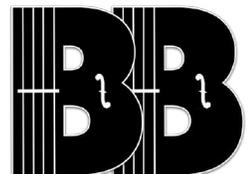
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Ron Jackson with one of his seven-string Eastmans

Seven Strings Are Heaven

Guitarist Ron Jackson likes working with a little extra

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

When Ron Jackson showed up for his regular lesson at the home studio of Bucky Pizzarelli one day about five years ago, he received some unexpected input from the venerated jazz guitarist: "Bucky told me, 'You know, there's not really anything more I can teach you.' That was a good boost for my ego, but of course I'm always learning more about the seven-string guitar."

At 55, Jackson is a master of the seven-string, which puts him in the ranks of a select few, including Pizzarelli and

his son John, George Van Eps, Howard Alden, and Steve Herberman. The instrument's extended range and harmonic possibilities are on brilliant display on Jackson's latest album, *Standards and Other Songs* (Roni Music), a trio outing with bassist Nathan Brown and drummer Darrell Green, featuring tunes from the Great American Songbook alongside more recent pop numbers.

Jackson's path to the seven-string was circuitous. He grew up in the small town of Harvard, Mass., and began his musical life as a rock guitarist before

going to Berklee College of Music in the early 1980s, where his world was severely shaken. "Coming from a small town of about 3,000 people, and suddenly being around so many guitar players who were wizards, I was devastated when I got to Berklee," he says. "I ended up almost having a nervous breakdown and quitting."

Although he did stick around to study composition and arranging at Berklee, Jackson eventually moved to Paris, where he concentrated on electric bass. Then, on a whim, he moved to New

York City in 1987 and resumed guitar playing, making his debut as a leader with 1991's *A Guitar Thing* (Muse). Since then, he has been a fixture on the New York scene, collaborating with the likes of Rufus Reid and Randy Weston, playing in Broadway pits, and teaching at the Brooklyn-Queens Conservatory of Music and Jazz at Lincoln Center, among other institutions.

In 2003, Jackson—wanting to develop expertise in the style of Freddie Green, the longtime Count Basie guitarist—started studying with Bucky Pizzarelli. While Pizzarelli showed Jackson the ins and outs of Green's trademark approach to comping, he also set the younger guitarist on a new path. "He was always telling me, 'You really have to get into some George Van Eps and play the seven-string guitar.' Bucky called the seven-string the 'new guitar' and thought of the six-string as outmoded."

Jackson eventually took Pizzarelli's advice and has never looked back. He plays seven-string all but exclusively—his main guitars are archtops by Eastman, though he also uses a Kremona Fiesta nylon-string—and he tunes the seventh string (the lowest) to A, a full fifth below the standard sixth-string E. "The rock guys who play seven-string tend to use a low B and the Brazilian guitarists use C, but I tune to A because that's what Bucky told me to do, as it's how George Van Eps tuned."

In a jazz setting, Jackson finds that the seven-string has advantages over the six-string. The extended low range gives him some fairly obvious harmonic and textural options, particularly on chords with a root note of A. He explains, "I really love to hit that low A on, say, an A minor- or major-ninth chord, or an A altered dominant. The seventh string adds this really huge, amazing sound—it's like another dimension."

The low A also allows Jackson to play certain pieces in their original keys, with chord voicings not accessible on a guitar in standard tuning, a prime example being the Billy Strayhorn song "Lush Life." Jackson says, "Bucky encouraged me to play that tune as a kind of exercise. It's in D-flat and is meant to be played in a low register, something

you can't do on a regular guitar, where the lowest note is E."

Naturally, Jackson encountered certain drawbacks when switching to the seven-string guitar. It has a wider neck than the six-string, and this is especially noticeable on the Kremona, which, typically for a nylon-string, has a more spacious string spacing. "At first it was tricky to play chords that spanned all seven strings," he acknowledges. "But now my fretting hand is accustomed to doing larger stretches in general."

Although Jackson enjoys the pianistic effects that can be had with a seven-string in an unaccompanied setting, its low end can be problematic in an ensemble with a bass or piano. "I've had disagreements with bassists who thought that I was stepping on their toes with my low notes," he says. "Now I usually make sure that the bassist doesn't mind if I'm playing in their register—or I try to coordinate things so that we're not in conflict."

Still, whatever the setting, Jackson exploits the bottom end whenever possible. "I love all of the possibilities of placing unexpected low notes against different chords. I'm always in wonder of just how many fresh colors you can get on a seven-string guitar." **JT**



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