

Michal Urbaniak - Fusion III (1975)

Written by bluesever

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- 1 *Chinatown (part I)*
- 2 *Kuyaviak goes funky*
- 3 *Roksana*
- 4 *Crazy kid*
- 5 *Prehistoric bird*
- 6 *Bloody kishka*
- 7 *Cameo*
- 8 *Stretch*
- 9 *Metroliner*
- 10 *Chinatown (part II)*

Musicians: Michał Urbaniak - electric violin, violin synthesizer Urszula Dudziak - voice, percussion, electronic percussion Wlodek Gulgowski - electric piano, Moog, and electric organ Anthony Jackson - bass guitar Gerald Brown - drums Steve Gadd - drums Larry Coryell - guitar John Abercrombie - guitar Joe Caro - guitar Bernard Kafka – voice

This is the 3rd and last album released in the US on the Columbia label by Polish violinist / composer Michal Urbaniak. In retrospect it is also one of the best Fusion albums ever recorded on this planet. Urbaniak, a veteran of the Polish Jazz scene, first came to prominence as the member of the legendary groups led by the Godfather of Polish Jazz, pianist / composer Krzysztof Komeda. While with Komeda, Urbaniak played the saxophone and switched to violin only after founding his own group in the late 1960s, when he also changed his musical direction from Modern / Free Jazz to Fusion, inspired by the groundbreaking innovations created at the time by Miles Davis.

In his group he included his wife, the extraordinary singer Urszula Dudziak and together they quickly developed a completely unique type of Fusion, which was light-years ahead of anything else happening in that genre at the time anywhere in the world. Mixing Jazz, Rock, Folklore and

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Avant-Garde vocals, they established a completely new approach to composition and multilayered complexity, as documented on the two albums the group recorded as part of the legendary "Polish Jazz" series of albums, which was simply brilliant.

Frustrated by the state of affairs in his country, which suffered under a Socialist Regime and harsh economic conditions, Urbaniak, like most of his colleagues, constantly looked for an opportunity to leave Poland and establish a career behind the Iron Curtain. He managed initially to record a couple of albums in West Germany, but the real break came when Columbia offered him a recording deal. He and his wife left Poland and settled in the USA, as did several other Polish Jazz musicians at the time, like his ex group member pianist / composer Adam Makowicz for example. The three albums Urbaniak recorded for Columbia (and several more for other US labels, especially the dazzling "Funk Factory" album recorded shortly after this one and also reissued on Wounded Bird) were outstanding and simply much better than anything the local scene could muster, but unfortunately Urbaniak's US career never really took off, same as the careers of all other Polish Jazz musicians who tried to make it there, in spite of their immense talents. The reason was simply the narrow-mindedness of the US Jazz community (listeners and critics alike), which considered Jazz to be exclusively an American Art Form and failed to recognize anything originating outside of the US as artistically valid and meaningful, even if it hit them in the face.

On this album Urbaniak is accompanied by top US Fusion players like guitarist John Abercrombie, bassist Anthony Jackson and drummer Steve Gadd, as well as Polish compatriot Keyboardist Wlodek Gulgowski. Guitarist Larry Coryell guests on one track, guitarist Joe Caro guests on another and Polish vocalist Bernard Kafka guests on yet another track. Drummer Gerald Brown replaces Gadd on two tracks. Dudziak's vocals are simply out of this world and alone are worth listening to this album repeatedly. Urbaniak wrote almost all the dazzling music except for three tracks: a Dudziak improvisation, a superb composition by Polish saxophonist Zbigniew Namyslowski, which fits this album's mood like a glove and one tune by Gulgowski. As already said, this is timeless, heavenly, unparalleled music, which I've been listening to in the last almost 40 years without any trace of getting tired by it any time soon. This is an absolutely essential Fusion music, and anybody who has not heard this music does not know the true meaning of Fusion. God bless Wounded Bird for finally releasing this divine album on CD! --- Adam Baruch, polish-jazz.blogspot.com

Ten album był dla nas w Polsce nie mniej ważny niż dla Michała Urbaniaka w Ameryce. Był rok 1975 i dotarła wiadomość, że Columbia wydała jego pierwsze nagranie z amerykańskimi

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muzykami, właśnie "Fusion III".

Wcześniej był "Fusion", czyli reedycja europejskiej płyty wytwórni CBS "Super Constellation", następnie "Atma", obie nagrane z naszymi jazzmanami. Od razu sugerowano mi utworzenie amerykańskiej grupy. "Tu masz najlepszych muzyków na świecie" - usłyszałem w Columbii. "Tak, ale oni nie grali ze mną pięć lat" - odpowiedział Michał Urbaniak. "Fusion III" to była już nowa jakość. Na basie wymiatał Anthony Jackson od Buddy'ego Richa, na gitarach elektrycznych kapitalne solówki grali: John Abercrombie ("Chinatown", "Metroliner") i Larry Coryell ("Bloody Kishka"). Na syntezatorze Mooga brylował Włodek Gulgowski, porywające wokalizy śpiewała Urszula Dudzák. Dodatkowym atutem były łatwo wpadające w ucho kompozycje: rewelacyjne otwarcie "Chinatown" i kapitalna wersja "Kuyaviak Goes Funky" Namysłowskiego. Klasyk godny kolekcjonera i miłośnika elektrycznego jazzu. --- Marek Dusza, audio.com.pl

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