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*Global Music With a New York Edge*

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May 20, 2019

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## Lyrical Saxophonist Alexa Tarantino Releases Her Debut Album at Jazz at Lincoln Center

Alto saxophonist [Alexa Tarantino](#) is highly sought after in the New York jazz scene for her high-voltage, expressive sound. But she's also found the time to do some writing over the last few years, which is where her debut album *Winds Of Change* – due to be streaming at [Posi-Tone Records](#) – comes in. The lineup on the record is killer: Christian Sands on piano, Nick Finzer on trombone, Joe Martin on bass and Rudy Royston on drums. She's playing the album release show on May 28 at 7:30 PM Dizzy's Club; cover is steep, \$35, but if you can afford it, you're in for a treat.

Sands' Debussy-esque poitillisms and a graceful whoosh or three from Royston's cymbals open the album's concise first track, *Wisp After Wisp*. Tarantino play airily and spaciouly as she builds to a catchy, allusively bluesy crescendo. *Face Value* is a briskly shuffling romp, Royston's firing off his signature, counterintuitive accents, the bandleader jousting playfully with Sands, Finzer adding a coyly jovial solo.

She plays bright, alternately soaring and gritty soprano on Noriko Ueda's catchy jazz waltz *Seesaw*, a feature for Tarantino in the all-female [Diva Jazz Orchestra](#). *Breeze* follows an easygoing, vintage 40s sentimental swing tangent up to a hard-charging, blues-infused Sands solo.

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Switching to alto flute, Tarantino's take of Jobim's Zingaro begins even breezier before Sands brings in the gravitas, Martin pulsing tersely over Royston's quasi-bolero groove which they slowly edge into amiably dancing territory. Square One, her first-ever composition, is the album's most epic track, built around a serisio, latin-tinged riff. Royston's cleverly flickering shuffle underpins Sands' steadily rising explorations, Tarantino alternating between serenity and shivery flash

The album's catchiest track among many, Calm is a wistful song without words, Finzer parsing the melody gingerly, Tarantino taking flight as the group shift toward funk behind her. Undercurrent, centered around a bassline that's more of a horn line, could be an Eric Dolphy jukebox jazz hit, Sands' jaunty, New Orleans-tinged solo over Royston's endless series of unexpected jabs.

The group burn through Ready or Not, Finzer ripsnorting and Tarantino spiraling over a tight but subtly shapeshifting, rapidfire shuffle. Tarantino and Sands open the closing ballad, Without as a duo, tenderly, her spacious, hopeful resonance over wary piano and an expansive groove. As memorable as all these tunes are, it's a good bet Tarantino has even more up her sleeve.

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