

Alexa Tarantino: Winds Of Change



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June 10, 2019

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It is time we stop referring to saxophonist [Alexa Tarantino](#) as one of the "on the rise" young stars in jazz. She has arrived, and by the sound of things, she is here to stay. Sure, her new release *Winds of Change* is her debut solo recording as a leader, but her playing is well documented on her duo release *Crossing Paths* (Infinite, 2015) with pianist Dariusz Terefenko, as well as Posi-Tone releases with [Lauren Sevian](#) and Lioness. She has recorded and performed with [Arturo O'Farrill](#), [The DIVA Jazz Orchestra](#), and the Village Vanguard Orchestra. Her quartet, and a quintet she leads with baritone saxophonist Sevian have been making a mark on the New York scene.



Tarantino has assembled a fine group of players for this occasion, including pianist [Christian Sands](#), whose influence cuts deep on the session.

The tunes click along in a finely-crafted, straight ahead fashion, with the opener "Wisp After Wisp" setting the tone for this splendid session. While the pieces are well-crafted, and the playing exquisite, the most memorable melodies are more contained within the probing, image conjuring solos provided by Tarantino. She creates beautifully in the moment throughout this recording.

To a large extent, a reset mode rolls with the ironically titled, "Square One." It represents the selection on the album that truly sounds as if all the players are all in, and reacting collectively. This tune rises above any compositional constraints, or preconceived notions of uniformity. While the entirety of the album is fine playing from a collection of top modern straight ahead players, "Square One," keenly notes what can happen to such an assemblage when even the slightest spark ignites a firestorm of collective imagination.

The same can be said with "Calm," which must refer to calm under fire. These two tracks define the rhythmic and harmonic undercurrent provided by the always musical Sands, the formidable drummer [Rudy Royston](#), and solid bassist Joe Martin. Tarantino answers with forceful, well imagined melodic improvisation. Known primarily as an alto player, Tarantino can play across the woodwind spectrum with admirable facility, seemingly avoiding the pitfalls of stylistic conformity which can afflict musical specialists, most notably, alto players.

Trombonist [Nick Finzer](#) contributes mightily on "Calm." He provides a stunning counterpoint to Tarantino's soaring alto, grounded in a deep, rich tonality that expresses his melody based approach in terms one might expect from a formidable trumpet voice. The front line sound the two combine to create is something to build on moving forward.

"Ready or Not" is an up-tempo, hard bop slide featuring Tarantino at her very best. She can ride the wave of this torrential rhythm section on the edge, drawing from a wellspring of historic alto bop sensibility. Finzer, as well in rapid fire form, is reminiscent of the playing of Julian Priester on the early sixties recordings of [Max Roach](#), and [Booker Little](#).

While many modern musicians can swing like mad, it is in interpreting the ballad form that a player is best distinguished. It is as undeniably true today, as it was for Miles Davis or John Coltrane. Tarantino's solitary "Without" puts that notion to test, in what is her most emotive playing on the record.

Winds of Change represents Tarantino's best opportunity to date to stretch out and give a true impression of her artistry. She is a much more broad based player now than she was just a few short years ago. Her melodic sensibility has more paths to travel, more open territory to ultimately explore. But her imaginative sketches, her innate connection to melody as a player has been apparent since she first arrived on the scene. She has a rare comfort level in the most demanding musical situations, reacting with grace and daring.

Winds of Change denotes a passage of time in the evolution of an artist, a snapshot. It is a secondary notion to what Tarantino ultimately does with the results.

Track Listing: Wisp After Wisp; Face Value; Seesaw; Breeze; Zingaro; Square One; Calm; Undercurrent; Ready or Not; Without.

Personnel: Alexa Tarantino: woodwinds; Christain Sands: piano; Joe Martin: bass; Rudy Royston: drums; Nick Finzer: trombone.

Title: [Winds of Change](#) | Year Released: 2019 | Record Label: Posi-Tone

