

# BRAITHWAITE & KATZ

Communications

## NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Ann Braithwaite  
(781) 259-9600  
Ann@bkmusicpr.com

### **Ken Thomson and Slow/Fast Release the powerful composed-jazz milestone, *Settle***

**On 2<sup>nd</sup> CD reedman Thomson (Bang On a Can All-Stars) is joined by guitar sensation Nir Felder, trumpeter Russ Johnson, bassist Adam Armstrong, and drummer Fred Kennedy**

*"Ken Thomson is an artist who is accustomed to threading between musical worlds, but Settle feels seamless, as if cut from whole cloth. The compositions are exquisitely tailored to the members of Slow/Fast, who play with soul and wit throughout. This is elegant, well-turned, sophisticated music that isn't afraid to bloody its knuckles when the situation demands it."* - Darcy James Argue

*"Mr. Thomson's compositions are intricately wrought and incident-steeped, even when they move in snowlike drifts."* - Nate Chinen, The New York Times

**Settle**, the new recording from **Ken Thomson and Slow/Fast**, exhibits the kind of stylistic breadth and alert experimentation that one would expect from a leader famed for his work in both the worlds of new jazz and contemporary classical music. Alto saxophonist, bass clarinetist and composer Thomson — a co-founder of the acclaimed band Gutbucket and a recent addition to the Bang On A Can All-Stars — digs deeper into uncharted musical realms with Slow/Fast, a visionary quintet that includes the guitar phenomenon **Nir Felder**, trumpeter **Russ Johnson**, bassist **Adam Armstrong** and drummer **Fred Kennedy**. **Settle**, the band's second album, will be released on September 23, 2014 on NCM East Records (40138).

Combining the sounds of improvisation-filled chamber jazz with the lucidity of contemporary classical composition — infused with distortion-laden twists that reveal the band's embrace of rock influences — Thomson and Slow/Fast bring new ideas to small-group jazz. Vivid composition rather than head-solo-head norms prevail here, lending the album a freshness that leads the listener on a journey to unexplored, yet inviting, sonic landscapes.

The five main pieces on **Settle** were developed after the band toured behind their debut record. Each piece has a discernable focus and theme — whether the ever-shifting grooves of "Settle," the pushing of Thomson and Felder to new heights on "We Are Not All In This Together," the wild use of instrumentation on "Bend Towards Light," or the wide compositional-dramatic arc of "Spring" — but all display the seamless interweave of rigorous composition and exhilarating go-for-broke improvising that has become the calling card of this outfit. **Settle** is the sound of a compact band creating a massive musical groundswell.

Slow/Fast has remained consistent in its personnel since the release of the band's first album, *It Would Be Easier If*, in 2010. Finding its way on to many of the Jazz Journalist Association's Best of 2010 lists, the debut recording also received a featured New York Times review which pointed to the "intricately wrought and incident-steeped" compositions and "gutsy precision of the playing." The members of Slow/Fast are each new jazz mainstays, including guitarist Nir Felder whose own debut recording as a leader was released to critical accolades earlier this year; the newly Chicago-based trumpeter Russ Johnson, and the New York go-to players: bassist Adam Armstrong and drummer Kennedy.

In addition to his work with Slow/Fast, Thomson's recent compositional output includes *Thaw*, a CD for string quartet and bass clarinet recorded with the heralded JACK Quartet. *Thaw* was ranked the #1 Classical CD of 2013 by Rhapsody.com and garnered a four-star review in DownBeat; the piece was also listed on NPR's "10 Songs Public Radio Can't Stop Playing."

<http://ktonline.net/>

## Ken Thomson and Slow/Fast:

### ***Settle***

Selected Critical acclaim

**Critic's Pick.** “Few musicians travel as assuredly and meaningfully between jazz and new music as saxophonist Ken Thomson. Thomson's pieces breathe and emanate an infectious energy, with every wend and wind hurtling the music forward rather than showing off the band's chops, and every deceleration and pause recasting the sections of his multipartite works rather than winding up the next display of virtuosity.” - Peter Margasak, *Chicago Reader*



★ “Settle is the smartly lunging new album by Slow/Fast, a band that would once have been understood, inexactly but efficiently, as part of the downtown scene. Featuring the **intricate long-form compositions** and reed playing of Mr. Thomson, it relies on the alertness of its supporting crew.” - Nate Chinen, *The New York Times*

“**One never encounters a dull or less than engaging moment...** thanks to the writing and the creativity and commitment of the musicians involved.” - Scott Albin, *JazzTimes*

**Five stars.** “Thomson's kaleidoscopic, multi-stylistic compositions are imbued with warmth and soul by an amazing ensemble. **Settle is an album for the ages:** truly fearless music made by people with a strong sense of commitment to their art.” - Dave Wayne, *All About Jazz*

Four stars. “**Thomson has become a force of nature.**” - Seth Colter Walls, *Wondering Sound*

“**One of the most exciting jazz albums I have heard for a while.** It's almost music you want to sing along to - it's that joyful, euphoric even. A rich and wonderful album which shows once again that jazz isn't about what's written and what's not but about attitude and groove and a space where head, heart and feet can all enjoy themselves.” - Peter Bacon, *thejazzbreakfast*

“Showcases his talents as musician and composer. **As intricate as Thomson's compositions tend to be, they also swing with conviction** and determination, primary credit for which must go to the musicians involved. On this fiery outing, Slow/Fast's playing packs a visceral punch.” - Ron Schepper, *Textura*

“Thoughtful yet energetic soloing (**nary is heard an extraneous note**)” - Mark Keresman, *JAZZed Magazine*

“Thomson may be **the best jazz bass clarinetist I've heard.**” - Lance Liddle, *Bebop Spoken Here*





## Players ›

### KEN THOMSON *Feeling the Payoff*

Being part of a collective can be valuable for musical development, but often it does very little for an individual player's name recognition.

That's what Brooklyn-based saxophonist-clarinetist Ken Thomson has come to realize after more than a decade as a member of the successful punk-jazz outfit Gutbucket. Its 15th anniversary activities included recording a live album at the Stone in New York City, to be released on Cuneiform in 2015. So although Gutbucket is still going strong, Thomson felt a few years ago that the time had come to venture on his own and give free rein to other musical ideas.

As a result, the reedist assembled his own quintet of top-notch musicians: trumpeter Russ Johnson, guitarist Nir Felder, Australian bass player Adam Armstrong and drummer Fred Kennedy. The band is called Ken Thomson and Slow/Fast, and its debut was 2010's *It Would Be Easier If* (Intuition).

"I was identified as someone who makes somewhat punky, fast, loud, distorted music," Thomson said a few hours before performing at Sugar Maple in Milwaukee as part of a tour in support of the group's sophomore recording, *Settle* (NCM East). "It is a departure from Gutbucket, which is more fast than slow. I wanted a wider pal-

ette that we could use."

Because the members of Slow/Fast all have busy schedules, it can be difficult for them to all get together to play. To make matters worse, Johnson left New York for Milwaukee in 2011. The leader finds comfort in knowing that these musicians are ready to invest their time in his compositions.

So, what motivates them to play Thomson's music? "The challenge," said Johnson. "The music is physically and mentally very demanding to play, but you feel the payoff at the end. When you practice it, you only see the challenge, but once you are on the bandstand, the beauty actually comes out and you realize all these extremely intricate events have their meaning."

The most striking aspect of a Slow/Fast performance is how intently the band members look at the scores. However, as Johnson suggests, Thomson's compositions do not have the dry or cerebral quality that mars too many similar exercises.

Thomson's knack for high-level intricacies and attention to detail are likely due to his keeping one foot in the New Music world. Until 2006, he ran the composer collective Bang On A Can's imprint Cantaloupe Music. Since he left that position, his ties with the organization actually have been tightening. He leads the highly physical,

12-piece Asphalt Orchestra, whose album *Plays The Pixies: Surfer Rosa* (Cantaloupe) features interpretations of the alt-rock band's compositions. Additionally, Thomson is a member of the Bang On A Can All-Stars, and in 2013 Cantaloupe released *Thaw*, a collection of his string quartet works performed by the Jack Quartet.

The bustling, hectic pace of life in New York City is another challenge for Thomson. He seizes any opportunity he has away from the city to write or flesh out his compositions. "I wake up in the morning and, unfortunately, the first thing in my mind is not writing music," he said. "The sad part is that our lives are 80 percent logistics and figuring things out [but only] 20 percent music. For me it's helpful to separate myself from the digital world."

*Settle* finally gives Thomson the opportunity to devote more time to the bass clarinet, an instrument he picked up well after he became proficient on the alto saxophone. (He also plays bass clarinet on the *Thaw* track "Perpetual.")

"I feel that the instrument is underutilized," he said. "It has a four-octave range that offers incredible possibilities. What I've realized with this band is that I can play unison or above the trumpet, and at the same time play down with the bass."

—Alain Drouot

# READER

CHICAGO  
SUN-TIMES  
PUBLICATION 2007

CHICAGO'S FREE WEEKLY | KICKING ASS SINCE 1971

10 | 2 | 14

## SOUNDBOARD

RECOMMENDED AND NOTABLE SHOWS, CRITICS' INSIGHTS, AND SELECT CONCERT LISTINGS

**KEN THOMSON & SLOW/FAST** Few musicians travel as assuredly and meaningfully between jazz and new music as saxophonist Ken Thomson. He's a member of New York's vaunted Bang on a Can All-Stars who recently wrote an album's worth of music for the dynamic string ensemble Jack Quartet. He also plays in the proggy rock band Gutbucket and leads the high-caliber improvising group Slow/Fast, which makes its *Chicago* debut tonight. Thomson's original

pieces on the group's strong new album, *Settle* (NMC East), reflect his penchant for complex music in a rigorous postbop context. The title track is a breathless sprint through shifting time signatures as his alto saxophone braids in wild zigzag patterns with the steely trumpet of Russ Johnson, eventually breaking apart to navigate the landscape with a mind-numbing improvisation that eats up the composition's chord changes like Pac-Man. The band's not-so-secret weapon is its agile rhythm section—featuring bassist Adam Armstrong, drummer Fred Kennedy, and guitarist Nir Felder—which sculpts and shapes the twisting lines with empathy and grace. There are lots of jazz artists who write complex music, but much of it lays flat and sounds stiff. Thomson's pieces breathe and emanate an infectious energy, with every wend and wind hurtling the music forward rather than showing off the band's chops, and every deceleration and pause recasting the sections of his multipartite works rather than winding up the next display of virtuosity. The first few minutes of “Spring” are given to an extended bass solo by Armstrong—with the others draping gorgeous harmonies over each movement—suddenly followed by fleet, rapid horn playing that shimmers like jewels and leads into a hard-hitting rock-flavored conclusion fueled by searing group improvisation. —**PETER MARGASAK**  
9:30 PM, *Constellation*, \$10. 18+



# The New York Times

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2014

## THE Listings

By Nate Chinen

★ **KEN THOMSON AND SLOW/FAST**

(Friday) “Settle” is the smartly lunging new album by Slow/Fast, a band that would once have been understood, inexactly but efficiently, as part of the downtown scene. Featuring the intricate long-form compositions and reed playing of Mr. Thomson, it relies on the alertness of its supporting crew, all of whom should be on deck for this album-release show: Russ Johnson on trumpet, Nir Felder on guitar, Adam Armstrong on bass and Fred Kennedy on drums. At ShapeShifter Lab, 18 Whitwell Place, Park Slope, Brooklyn, shapeshifterlab.com; \$10.



### Best jazz shows in New York City



**Tom Harrell**

\$\$\$\$ ✓

Village Vanguard 178  
Seventh Ave South, at 11th  
St

Tue Oct 7 - Sun Oct 19

MORE INFO



**Steve Wilson  
Quintet**

\$\$\$\$ ✓

Jazz Standard 116 E 27th  
St, between Park Ave  
South and Lexington Ave

Thu Oct 9 - Sun Oct 12

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**Ken Thomson  
and Slow/Fast**

\$\$\$\$ ✓

ShapeShifter Lab 18  
Whitwell Pl, between Carroll  
and 1st Sts, 11215

Fri Oct 10

MORE INFO



**Barbara Carroll**

\$\$\$\$ ✓

Birdland 315 W 44th St,  
between Eighth and Ninth  
Aves

Sat Oct 11

MORE INFO



## Settle-- Ken Thomson and Slow/Fast

The ever-shifting textures of Ken Thomson's pre-composed and arranged music provide both an impetus and challenge for the improvisers in his quintet Slow / Fast, and reflect his multifaceted musical personality. The alto saxophonist-bass clarinetist-composer's other affiliations include the new music Bang on a Can All-Stars, the avant-garde marching band Asphalt Orchestra, the punk-jazz band Gutbucket, the contemporary classical JACK Quartet, and the next-generation chamber orchestra Signal. The other members of Slow / Fast, intact since their 2010 debut CD, *It Would Be Easier If*, share Thomson's versatility and inquisitiveness, with trumpeter Russ Johnson and bassist Adam Armstrong each having appeared on over 80 recordings, and drummer Fred Kennedy on dozens, while the much in demand young guitarist Nir Felder has already played in the bands of Esperanza Spalding, Terri Lyne Carrington, Jack DeJohnette, Greg Osby, and Joey DeFrancesco, to name just a few. Except for the two-minute "Coda," all the pieces on *Settle* run from nine to ten minutes, but despite the length one never encounters a dull or less than engaging moment in their mixture of jazz, modern classical, and rock elements, thanks to the writing and the creativity and commitment of the musicians involved.

The title tune, "Settle," finds Thomson's deep-bodied alto preceding a spiky, intricately woven theme from him and Johnson, with Felder's emphatic fuzz-toned vamp propelling them forward. A secondary, more lyrically flowing line is then introduced, as the guitarist bows out and Kennedy's drums become the spark plug. The leader steps in, displaying a nimbly darting energy, until yet another thematic sax-trumpet unison groove is unveiled, with Felder supplying a spellbinding, breathless motif in support. A musing undercurrent ensues in the form of an accelerating vamp, over which Kennedy explodes with a turbulent statement to take out this provocatively restless opening track. Thomson's intro to "We Are Not All In This Together" comes on the bass clarinet, with increasingly insistent circular patterns accented by just Armstrong's bass. Johnson's languid legato tones eventually enter the mix, and then Felder's cutting notes, before the latter embarks on a solo that contains a variety of riffs, dancing figures, and heavyweight chords. Thomson and Felder's alluring concurrent prearranged extended lines, with trumpet threaded in, gives way to a similar textural sequence from bass clarinet and bass fiddle to conclude a riveting, mostly through-composed work, except for Felder's improv.

Jabbing sporadic notes from Thomson's alto, punctuated by Kennedy's cymbals, initiate "Welding for Freedom," until Johnson emerges in contrapuntal reply and then call and response. Felder's echoing emanations and Kennedy's nervous brush work comprise the next section, at which point alto and trumpet finally unite to play the enlivening, spinning theme that seems the logical result of all that has come before. Johnson's stirring solo culminates in his being joined by Thomson for some eloquent counterpoint. The finale brings Felder into the fray with a relentlessly strummed backdrop to complete yet another well-conceived and memorably executed selection. Arco bass and clanging guitar chords frame Thomson's sinuous alto on the wafting theme of "Spring," soon briefly accompanied by Johnson's trumpet. An alto and trumpet vamp bolster Armstrong's emotionally expressive bass solo. Thomson and Johnson play a compelling, spiraling new melody, first in unison and then in embellished separate streams. This is ultimately succeeded by Felder's portentous chords. The horns improvise collectively and heatedly over the guitarist prior to a diminuendo climax--Johnson's pensive ruminations combining with Thomson's rotating motif and Armstrong's tension-laden bowing.

Rhythmic thrusts between trumpet and bass clarinet fill the launching of "Bend Towards Light," to be supplanted by Felder's ethereal motif. The three musicians fleetingly meet in stimulating counterpoint, but Thomson, Johnson, and Kennedy become the next threesome to heartily engage. Thomson's lucid, winding solo receives inspiring commentary from trumpet, bass, and drums, and Felder's heavy metal flavored attack is added in the climactic seconds of this rhythmically rousing arrangement. On "Coda," Thomson's alto runs a scale repeatedly while Johnson's sweet-timbred trumpet delivers legato tones. Felder and Armstrong now surface to inject their own complementary designs, and before you know it this promising "coda" has run its course.



## Ken Thomson And Slow/Fast: Settle (2014)

By [DAVE WAYNE](#), Published: November 16, 2014



There are ways to get to know people really well, really quickly. Many of these fall under the general category: "challenge them, somehow." For a certain time of my life this meant: "go camping with them." Really. If you go camping with a group of people, you will find out a lot about them in a very brief time. Over the past decade or so, I've found that if you play really intense music with other musicians, you will also get to know them really quickly, and in much the same way. Or you could just go camping. [Ken Thomson](#) admits as much in the trailer for *Settle*, the latest album with his band Slow/Fast. Almost four years after the release of their debut *It Would Be Easier If* (Intuition Records, 2010), these guys clearly know each other really well. The near-telepathic ease with which Thomson and his partners-in-crime relate to each other in the context of Thomson's absolutely wicked compositions is readily palpable. The best thing about *Settle*, and really Thomson's whole concept, is that super-complicated music can be truly elevating and beautiful in an absolutely obvious, heart-on-the-sleeve way.

Thomson has heavy credentials in both the classical and jazz / improvised music worlds. He co-leads the punk-jazz band [Gutbucket](#), plays alto saxophone and directs the [Asphalt Orchestra](#) (a world-class street band), and has worked with the contemporary classical ensemble [Bang on a Can All-Stars](#) since 2013. Thomson is also a prolific composer whose work spans many styles within contemporary classical, jazz and rock music. Those reference points, while useful, only partly parameterize what Slow/Fast is all about. Thomson himself describes Slow/Fast as "long form, theatrical and often intense music for alto saxophone/bass clarinet with trumpet, guitar, bass, drums."

The title track is not what you'd expect. It's all elbows and knees; urgent tempo, angrily fuzzed guitar chords and darting horn lines. Things settle down into a surging 6/8 for Thomson's alto solo—his sound is light, fast and articulate—before the piece takes on a proggy math-rock feel. [Fred Kennedy](#) takes full advantage of an extended feature spot over a horn chorale towards the end. [Russ Johnson](#), [Nir Felder](#) and Thomson (now on bass clarinet) imbue the insanely complex fugue-like theme of "We Are Not All In This Together" with a sense of kindness and warmth that, again, goes against the grain of the title. But it's bassist [Adam Armstrong](#)'s attentive half-time pulse that really makes this piece pop into 3-D.

Kennedy crushes it again on "Welding for Freedom." Here, the young drummer plays two opposing lines, each with one hand: one matches Johnson's trumpet and the other parallels Thomson's alto. He continues playing the line, accompanied only by minimal guitar and bass chords until Thomson's fetching theme kicks in, followed by Johnson's fierce solo. *Spring* is no less engaging. Armstrong's meditative solo is followed by a rippling horn figure which, itself, is dramatically interrupted by Felder's metallic chords and Kennedy's crashing drums. A neo-classical feel pervades "Bend Towards Light," which is almost through-composed with the exception of Thomson's virtuosic bass clarinet solo. Yet, this piece is anything but cold or stiff. Kennedy's funky drums snake around a call-and-response figure that pits bass and bass clarinet against guitar and trumpet. "Coda" is, well, a brief coda. Like the rest of the album, it has a mysterious beauty to it.

Ken Thomson's music is unbelievably subtle, devilishly complicated, and it must be difficult to play. Yet, it's not difficult to listen to. There are several reasons for this. One is obvious: Thomson's band is populated with total badasses. The other is that playing music is a process. If you engage in that process over time with the same people—and they're the right people—the music gets more soulful, more heartfelt, more personal. On *Settle*, an album whose title itself implies a certain happy stability, Thomson's kaleidoscopic, multi-stylistic compositions are imbued with warmth and soul by an amazing ensemble. *Settle* is an album for the ages: truly fearless music made by people with a strong sense of commitment to their art.



## Ken Thomson and Slow/Fast, *Settle*



By Seth Colter Walls  
Contributor  
on 09.23.14 in [Reviews](#)

Alto saxophonist, clarinetist and composer Ken Thomson has been a key part of New York's contemporary music scene for years, and was a founder of the Asphalt Orchestra (otherwise known as the Lincoln Center street marching band that can play Björk, Mingus and Meshuggah). But

in recent months, Thomson has become a force of nature. Around the same time he was inducted into the [Bang On A Can All-Stars](#), Thomson's album with the JACK Quartet, *Thaw*, drew a rave from Steve Reich.

**A satisfying variety of thematic material, touching on modes both tender and strident**

All that was left for him to do was to step up his jazz ensemble game, which is just what he and his sometimes-swinging, often-improvising group Slow/Fast do with this release. While the band's 2010 debut was promising, at times it could feel as though its execution of an avant-prog-jazz splatter aesthetic

was more important than any of the tunes on offer.



### **Settle**

Ken Thomson and Slow/Fast  
2014 | Ncm East / CD Baby

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*Settle* fixes that problem. Though the opening title track naturally delivers plenty of crunchy guitar grind, courtesy of rising star Nir Felder, it doesn't dominate. There's also a lyrical statement on alto, from Thomson, to kick things off. And by bringing in the swing feel, here and there, drummer Fred Kennedy helps avoid the stiff, martial nature that can creep in to any piece with this many tricky changes. Elsewhere, there's a satisfying variety to Thomson's thematic material, which touches on modes both tender and strident (listen in particular to the parts for his own axe and Russ Johnson's trumpet).

The interplay between Thomson and Johnson is also a highlight on "We Are Not All in This Together," which has the bandleader on bass clarinet. It's a potent one-two kickoff to an album that, even if it can't quite keep up that

same level of inspiration throughout, manages to put forward yet another compelling side of Thomson's compositional mind.



## About Ken Thomson

**Ken Thomson** is a Brooklyn-based clarinetist, saxophonist, and composer. In demand as a composer and freelancer in many settings, he moves quickly between genres and scenes, bringing a fiery intensity and emotional commitment to every musical situation; *Time Out NY* called him “the hardest-working saxophonist in new-music show business.”

He has recently released a CD of his compositions for the heralded JACK Quartet, entitled *Thaw*, on Cantaloupe Music, called #1 Classical CD of 2013 by Rhapsody.com, and was featured in NPR’s “10 Songs Public Radio Can’t Stop Playing.” His latest project of exclusively his music, called *Slow/Fast*, released its debut CD *It Would Be Easier If* internationally on Intuition Records in 2010, garnering a feature review in *The New York Times* highlighting the “intricately wrought and incident-steeped” compositions and “gutsy precision of the playing.” A followup disc, *Settle*, will be released in 2014.

Thomson plays clarinet for the Bang on a Can All-Stars, one of the world’s preeminent new music ensembles. He leads the *Asphalt Orchestra* - a 12-piece next-generation avant-garde marching band, called “cooly brilliant, infectious... top notch players” by *The New York Times*. He plays saxophone and is one of the 3 composers in the punk/jazz band Gutbucket, with whom he has toured internationally to nineteen countries and 32 states over fourteen years, and released CDs for Knitting Factory, Enja, NRW, Cantaloupe and Cuneiform Records. He is on faculty at the Bang on a Can Summer Music Festival.

As a composer, he has been commissioned by the American Composers Orchestra, Bang on a Can, the True/False Film Festival, and others, and has received awards from New Music USA, ASCAP and Meet the Composer. *The New York Times* wrote of his work *Wait Your Turn* for the American Composers Orchestra upon its debut at Carnegie Hall: “The concert ended on a high note.... the music offered a density worthy of the closing bars of a Led Zeppelin epic;” and of his work “seasonal.disorder” for the Bang on a Can All-Stars, “a virtuoso piece... a texture laced with power chords, screaming clarinet lines and cluster-laden piano writing. In the end it is sheer madness, in a good, thrillingly visceral way.” The *San Francisco Weekly* writes about his music, “Thomson’s original compositions are as complex as a beehive, filled with amber-hued nooks and crannies that bear traces of jazz, world music, and classical, without succumbing to any of them.”

As a saxophonist and clarinetist, he is a member of the next-generation chamber orchestra Signal (conducted by Brad Lubman), working directly with composers from Steve Reich to Helmut Lachenmann and a performer on CDs for Mode, Orange Mountain, and Cantaloupe Records. He is a frequent collaborator with many new-composed music groups including Alarm Will Sound. He has also worked as a music director, notably, directing composer Julia Wolfe’s “Traveling Music” at the Bordeaux Conservatory, France, 2009, and has conducted performances of “Music for Airports” with the Bang on a Can All-Stars, choir, and guest musicians in Melbourne and Buenos Aires.

He has performed extensively across the US and Europe at major jazz festivals including Jazz a Vienne, San Sebastian Jazz Festival, London Jazz Festival, Warsaw Summer Jazz Days, Rotterdam Jazz, Jazz Saalfelden, Copenhagen Jazz Festival, Belgrade Jazz Festival, and many others. He is a Conn-Selmer Artist, and endorses D’Addario Reeds and Sibelius software.

## About the musicians

Trumpeter **Russ Johnson** is a recent Midwest transplant after spending 23 years as an important member of New York City’s jazz community. He has six recordings as a leader or co-leader and has performed on more than 75 recordings as a sideman. Johnson has worked alongside many legendary figures in jazz including Lee Konitz, Steve Swallow, Bill Frisell, and Joe Lovano. In addition, he has performed and/or recorded with a long list of the prominent musicians currently on the international jazz scene including Ken Vandermark, Myra Melford, and Jenny Scheinman. His most recent recording, *Meeting Point* was released in May 2014 on Relay

Recordings, and is already receiving critical acclaim. Johnson currently serves as the Director of Jazz Studies at the University of Wisconsin - Parkside.

Called “the next big jazz guitarist” by NPR, hailed by the New York Times as a “whiz kid”, and dubbed “incredible” by the Montreal Gazette, **Nir Felder** is a new voice in jazz guitar. Growing up in the New York City suburbs, Felder spent his youth playing in rock bands while learning about jazz at the local record store, inspired by icons from John Coltrane to voodoo child Jimi Hendrix. After attending Berklee College of Music on a full scholarship, Felder moved to New York City in 2006 and quickly became one of the city’s most highly sought-after sideman, notching credits in bands led by Grammy winner Esperanza Spalding, Terri Lyne Carrington (whose recent release featuring Felder on guitar won a Grammy for Best Jazz Instrumental Album), Jack DeJohnette, Greg Osby, Joey DeFrancesco, Eric Harland, Jose James, Meshell Ndegeocello, and Cindy Blackman and performing with the New York City Opera, Dianne Reeves, Bobby McFerrin, Stanley Clarke, Lizz Wright, Matisyahu, Black Sheep and others at venues including Radio City Music Hall and the Village Vanguard and national television stations NBC and Fox.

In 2000, having established himself as one of Australia’s most versatile and in-demand bass players, **Adam Armstrong** relocated to New York with the assistance of an Australian Arts Council professional development grant. He currently performs in groups led by jazz saxophonist Eric Person, drummer Christian Finger, composer/saxophonist Ken Thomson (Slow/Fast), the singer-songwriters K.P. Devlin, Dana LaCioix and more. Armstrong has played with such jazz greats as Kenny Kirkland, Kenny Wheeler, Maria Schneider and drumming legend Billy Cobham and has toured through 34 countries, performing in clubs and at major festivals in Europe, Asia, Australia and the Americas. Armstrong appears on over 80 albums, including two ARIA (Australian Recording Industry Award) winners, has played on the soundtracks of feature films, theatre productions and has given master classes and workshops at institutions around the world. When he’s not touring, Armstrong can be seen performing in many of New York City’s notable venues including Cornelia Street Café, Joe’s Pub, Le Poisson Rouge, Barbès, the Blue Note and Jazz at the Lincoln Center’s Dizzy’s Club Coca Cola.

*All About Jazz* has likened drummer **Fred Kennedy**’s “multi-phase pulse” to a “snarling beast,” and says that Kennedy’s “slashing” drumming keeps the listener “locked in and off-balance at the same time.” Brooklyn-based Kennedy’s pursuits cover a wide range of genres, from folk to free; electro-acoustic to chamber music; and indie-rock to traditional and modern jazz. Kennedy has had the opportunity to perform and/or record with many of New York’s contemporary jazz masters and has toured throughout Europe and North and South America. He has played on dozens of recordings, and can be heard regularly in such NYC clubs as the Blue Note, Smalls, Rockwood Music Hall, Zebulon, the Knitting Factory, Tea Lounge, 55 Bar, and the Stone. Some recent projects and collaborators include Zach Brock and the Magic Number, Gray Code, Ken Thomson and Slow/Fast, Pamela Rodriguez, and Elin Sigvardsson. In addition to his work as a performer, Kennedy is a frequent collaborator with theater, dance, and video artists as both a composer and sound designer.

**NCM EAST** is an artist-run record label/collective whose main goals are to provide an outlet for new, original music and to establish the NCM East name as a synonym for honest, well-crafted, forward-thinking sounds. Founded in 1995, the label has grown to include everything from electronica and songwriting to improvised and composed instrumental music. All NCM EAST releases are artist-produced and funded, feature excellent artwork and maintain a high quality of sound and production. This CD is distributed internationally by Alliance distribution.

<http://ktonline.net/>

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