



## Andy Zimmerman - Half Light

### **Musicians:**

Andy Zimmerman - Tenor Saxophone

Dave Douglas - Trumpet

Kevin Hays - Piano

Matt Penman - Bass

It's a bit of a dream for me to listen to this record. A collection of some of my favorite musicians in the world playing a music that sparkles with personal vision. For many people, this might be the first time they've heard the music of Andy Zimmerman, but for me Andy is as essential to my own personal musical development and taste as any of the greats. I'm genuinely jealous of the people that get to hear Andy for the first time.

I've never liked the word "talent." As a society we view talent the same way we viewed intelligence in the 1950's. You're either "smart" and you go to college or you're not and you work with your hands. Before Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and the proliferation of educational theories since the 60's, being smart was a simple on-off switch. In most ways we use the same black and white approach to music in 2018. It's common to say "I don't have any musical talent" or even "my son/daughter has no gift for music." Music is a non-representational art-form--it's not mimicking something found in nature--it is constructed full cloth from the ether. It stands outside of every societal and linguistic marker we have. It's bigger than our known world and yet, and YET, we insist on this binary, reductive formula. Talent, you either have it or you don't.

I've known and admired Andy Zimmerman's music for twenty years. We played duo piano and sax throughout our years together in New York University's fledgling Jazz program. We toured in Europe together and he recorded with me on my first record in 2007. Andy's got a sound on the horn that is all his own. There's a musicality in his improvisation that feels sung and never constrained or constructed. I've seen people react immediately to Andy's playing, people not used to listening to Jazz suddenly turning their heads. Something universal is in his playing. For me, Andy could run major scales up and down the instrument and it would still speak volumes. This is perhaps becoming more of a love-letter than liner notes, but as awkward as it might be to say it, maybe this is what's left when you take "talent" out of the picture. Music, especially instrumental music, is this amorphous, enormous, pervasive, profound thing. It sits outside of every parameter we can frame it with. It doesn't speak about anything other than itself and it only has

meaning when you share it with someone. Music either speaks to you or it doesn't. If nothing else, love's at least a bigger and more inclusive word for its source than "talent".

The songs on this record sound like nothing else I've heard. Most of these songs are Andy's compositions, sketches that he lets the band tease apart and put back together. The unique voice isn't always a prodigy or a technical wizard or an uncanny ear. Because no matter how fast you learn, you'll never know it all. It's not how quick you can master something that matters; it's do you have something to say? Learning how to read when you're two years old is not an indicator of whether or not you'll someday write a great novel. It's how you live and who you are that makes you a creator. It's about a perspective and a desire to share it.

Andy, Matt Penman, Kevin Hays and Dave Douglas are all masters on their instruments, but much more importantly they have voices that are singular and true. What's talent compared to truth? We play music to forget technique. We spend our lives honing a skill set that allows us to be as transparent as possible. We are trying to do nothing more or less than show as much of ourselves as the listener can hear.

- Elan Mehler