



## Noah Preminger - Some Other Time

### **Musicians:**

Noah Preminger - Tenor Saxophone

Ben Monder - Guitar

John Patitucci - Bass

Billy Hart - Drums

The line on Noah Preminger is that he's a bad ass. Noah knows how to box. If he wanted to, Noah could kick your ass. Noah rides a motorcycle, and says inflammatory things. Noah jumps out of planes.

Maybe Noah's hiding something.

Here's an artist at the peak of his powers, stripping his technique to the bone and laying melody on the table. Backed by a band of all-stars and with no artifice, few second takes and a lack of gratuitous chops, Noah follows the tradition of the greats. To me, this is Noah's finest album, and one of the best records of recent years, not because of its concept or even its execution, but because it does what great jazz music is supposed to do; capturing a moment in time --an emotion so fleeting it can't be expressed in words-- and crystalizing it in wax forever.

On a ballad, you're as exposed in the moment as improvised music can make you. Noah's not a badass, he's a poet. Just another sensitive dude, trying to speak the truth.

The tunes:

**My Little Brown Book:** The Strayhorn original probably most famously recorded by Coltrane and Ellington on their 1963 release. It's a bold choice for a first track, diving head first into the number-one-inevitable-comparison for every tenor player. But Noah's a head-first kind of guy and this version is its own beast in every way. Ben Monder is probably the preeminent living guitarist these days along with Frisell, Methany, and Rosenwinkel. Like any true artist this preeminence is a result of 'voice' more than anything else. There's no mistaking Ben Monder for anyone else both in sound and concept. When Noah enters his sound is so full and present, one chorus of the melody is all that's needed here to get the full weight of the composition and the voices of all the musicians heard. When you're fully invested in the moment the moment can tell a whole story by itself.

**Semenzato:** This is the only original on the record. A haunting cyclical composition whose melody is strong enough to provide a framework for blowing. John Patitucci opens up the soloing with a quick change from his assured bowing work to pizzicato. By any measure John is a master and one of the most lyrical bassists of this or any time. Check out his interactions with Noah as the tenor returns to pick up his solo. Intuition of the highest order.

**A Ghost of a Chance:** Here, that intuition expands as Monder lays out and the track is tackled with just the trio. Again, Preminger is able to give just a taste of the melody before launching into a solo that contains just enough of the original melodic content to keep you grounded while maintaining his own voice all the way through. I love the little cadenza Noah drops at the end of the tune. Fearless stuff.

**Una Limosna por el Amor de Dios:** While growing up, Noah used to play through the works of composer Agustín Barrios with a friend who played classical guitar. This piece in particular stayed with him through the years. There's three layers of Monder's already thick sound on this one and Noah's tone shines like a lighthouse. I love the broken feel from Billy Hart here. Billy claims to be the most recorded jazz drummer in the world and I believe it. Billy is a fierce presence but always a supporting one --everywhere at once but never stepping on anyone's toes. The pocket that Hart and Patitucci find on this record is as deep as they come.

**Porcelain:** I don't think it's even left field anymore to cover rock and pop hits on jazz records, but this one's still a surprise. It's such a faithful rendition. No one is trying to out-rock Nirvana or mine a piece of pop-fluff for a new angle at a melody and a chuckle of recognition. This is a true cover, and one borne from love of the original. Californication from the Red Hot Chili Peppers is one of Noah's favorite albums. There's Patitucci's sound again, singing the counter melody. No wasted notes or gestures from anyone. This is my favorite track on this album.

**Try a Little Tenderness:** There's a sustained continuity of improvisation from Noah's chorus into Monder's solo and to the out chorus that's such a difficult thing to pull off. The whole piece is tied firmly to the melodic core of the piece. Monder's coda at the end of Preminger's little cadenza sums up this idea and the song perfectly. A collaboration of the highest order.

**Melancholia:** Here's another tune from the Duke Ellington Canon but a less well known one. First recorded solo piano by Duke in 1953. Noah was going for a specific feel which took the band a moment to find. This was the only tune which required a couple takes to nail the feel and form of the tune. Again John's soloing is featured. There's not too much more that can be said about an artist of Patitucci's stature. Patitucci's an original, whose mastery of technique is used to hone a conduit to his own personal truth.

**Boots of Spanish Leather:** Here's a Bob Dylan tune from his seminal recording "The Times They Are a-Changin'". Just the trio of Noah, Ben and John makes this a meditative and calming piece. It's ballsy and beautiful, and it plays it straight.

**Some Other Time:** Noah ends the record with another standard. Again divorcing the emotional core of the piece from the melodic content, so that the whole piece, composition and improvisation, is joined. The band plays this old tune like they've never heard it before. Listen to Billy and Ben dance around the corners of this melody while John holds it down. Here, Noah spends even more time on the cadenza, not so much out on a limb as already falling through space. It's not the landing that counts. It's the jump.

- Elan Mehler