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# Pete McCann, Without Question Review

by Brice Boorman

JUNE 20, 2023



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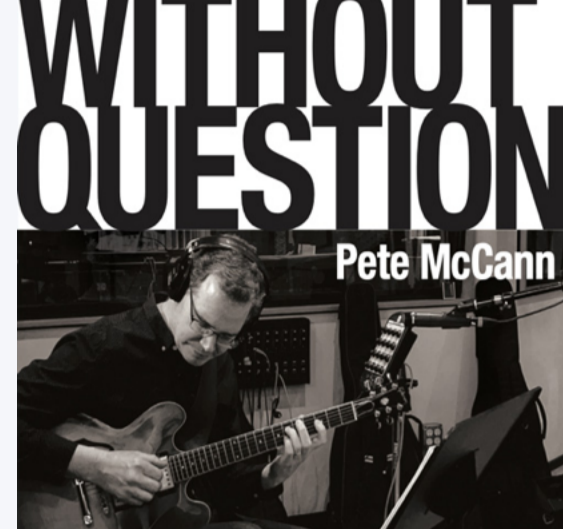
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## Pete McCann, Without Question Review

WITHOUT QUESTION: A DEFINITIVE STATEMENT FROM JAZZ MAESTRO PETE MCCANN



In the landscape of jazz guitar, few figures cast as long a shadow as Eau Claire, Wisconsin-born guitarist Pete McCann. Over a career spanning more than three decades, McCann has distinguished himself as an integral part of the New York City jazz scene, collaborating with an impressive roster of fellow luminaries such as Kenny Wheeler, Dave Liebman, and the Manhattan Transfer, to name just a few.

His seventh album as a bandleader, *Without Question*, is a seminal work that encapsulates his musical odyssey, displaying the breadth of his electric and acoustic guitar mastery. McCann's artistry is amplified by an ensemble of accomplished musicians: Steve Wilson on alto and soprano saxophone, Henry Hey on piano and Rhodes, Matt Pavolka on acoustic and electric bass, and Mark Ferber on drums. Together, they inject vitality into McCann's compositions, making *Without Question* a standout release in modern jazz, especially in the jazz guitar world.

The album title, *Without Question*, signifies McCann's bold declaration of self-identity. No longer content to be compared to other guitarists, he asserts his unique sonic identity throughout the album, each track revealing a distinct aspect of his musical uniqueness.

"I Can Remember," a tribute to the late John Abercrombie, is a poignant homage that captures the melodic richness that defined Abercrombie's work. McCann's personal recollections of Abercrombie's effortless melodic style and unique melodic/harmonic colors infuse the track with a sense of reverence and deep admiration.

McCann's inventive spirit is evident in "Trifecta," a complex composition built around a rhythmic motif of dotted 8th notes and a trisected harmony. McCann displays his technical prowess and creativity during his solo, all while maintaining the theme of three key centers, lending the piece an exotic allure.

McCann's connection to recent global events is palpable in tracks like "Lost City," a haunting reflection on the eerie silence of New York City during the early days of the Covid-19 lockdown, and "Conspiracy Theory," a politically charged commentary on the turbulent aftermath of a contentious presidential election. McCann's edgy guitar tone infuses this funky selection with attitude, while his fusion-style solo melds the energy of rock with jazz sophistication.

Yet, the album is not solely introspective or social commentary. McCann also pays homage to his influences and peers. "Lovely Thing" is a tender tribute to the late saxophonist Lee Konitz, a testament to McCann's deep respect and admiration for his legacy. The ensemble shines, skillfully blending bebop techniques with contemporary jazz colors, while McCann's fluid bebop language and energetic chordal figures drive the piece.

"Blues For O.M." showcases McCann's innovative composition process. He employs Olivier Messiaen's fourth mode of limited transposition within a jazz blues context, creating an engaging interplay of tension and resolution. The ensemble of Wilson, Hey, and McCann navigate the intricacies of the octatonic scale with bebop-style resolutions, striking a balance between a traditional blues feel and avant-garde explorations. McCann's distortion-laden solo adds a layer of grit, and his use of note-bending techniques and double stops infuse the piece with additional expressiveness and harmonic depth. This composition encapsulates McCann's creative vision and versatility, seamlessly merging elements of straight-ahead jazz, blues, bebop, and modern harmonic concepts.

*Without Question* is a narrative of McCann's evolution as a guitarist and composer, a reflection of his journey, and his response to the world around him. The album is a definitive documentation of McCann's identifiable skills as a guitarist, composer, and storyteller.



Recorded at Big Orange Sheep Studios, *Without Question* bears the signature of a studio designed for live jazz recordings. The studio, known for its classic atmosphere, natural light, and flexible room layout, occupies a

prominent space in South Brooklyn and is equipped with an Argosy Console 90 Series desk, a 32-channel Soundcraft Ghost analog mixing console, and a range of outboard equipment racks. The studio is distinguished by its ability to cater to the specific demands of jazz ensemble recordings. *Without Question*, McCann's fusion of technical mastery, emotional depth, and musical insight was captured beautifully during the recording process and is part of the whole sound of this beautiful album. It stands as a milestone in his long-evolving career—an album that is, without question, quintessentially Pete McCann.

### OVERVIEW

ARTIST	Pete McCann
ALBUM	Without Question
LABEL	McCannic Music
RELEASE DATE	August 4, 2023

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