

# Pete McCann, Without Question Review

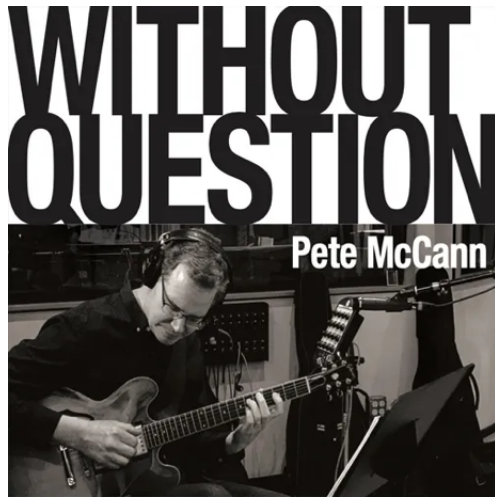
A SONIC BANQUET: PETE MCCANN'S WITHOUT QUESTION – A MODERN JAZZ GUITAR FEAST FOR THE SENSES



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**A Sonic Banquet: Pete McCann's Without Question – A Modern Jazz Guitar Feast for the Senses**

by Nolan DeBuke



Pete McCann, a jazz giant from Wisconsin, has indeed been a part of the very soul of New York City's jazz scene for over three decades. ***Without Question***, his seventh, is a testament to the skills that have made him such a sought-after sideman and his irreplaceable contribution to over 100 CDs. He has worked with a wide range of musicians, including Kenny Wheeler, Dave Liebman, Lee Konitz, The Manhattan Transfer, Patti Austin, Brian Blade, Bobby Previte, Grace Kelly, the Mahavishnu Project, and the Maria Schneider Orchestra. McCann is known for his versatility and ability to blend different jazz styles. He is also a gifted composer and arranger.

***Without Question*** boasts the talents of Steve Wilson on saxophone, Henry Hey on piano and Rhodes, Matt Pavolka on acoustic and electric bass, and Mark Ferber on drums, but it's the heart and soul of McCann that shines brightly in the constellation of these talents. Every track carries a piece of his history, inspiration, and distinct voice.

"Without Question," the title track and the opening sounds of the album, is an up-tempo modern jazz composition that serves as an excellent vehicle for this talented ensemble. McCann's composition creates textures and varying degrees of activity, stimulating our senses and requiring us to dig deeper into his album and playing. His solo on this selection is fluid, lyrical, and sounds of the jazz heritage are brought into focus through the big ears of a seasoned modern jazz guitarist.

When you listen to "I Can Remember," you can feel the warm memory of John Abercrombie resonate in every chord; McCann's composition captures the rich chordal textures and elegant melodies for which Abercrombie was celebrated for playing. Abercrombie's influence on McCann is evident in the poignant, melodic solo that employs climbing singing melodies and colorful harmonic/melodic relations. McCann's own personality shines with his use of the jazz blues language, bends, and double stops. It's a touching tribute to a great musician, carefully and lovingly presented.

"Trifecta" is a musical jambalaya. McCann ingeniously stirs up a rhythmic motif and spices it with harmonies from three key centers – C, Ab, and E – each a major third away from the next. It's a complex, spicy mix that keeps your palate engaged and exotic intrigue. Both McCann and Willson dig deep into this tasty dish, adding their own unique spices to bring out the audacious possibilities of the bold harmonic dish.

Songs like "Lost City" and "Hindsight" echo the sentiments of an era marked by the Covid lockdown. They are like a glass of fine bourbon – complex, a little bitter, but with an undercurrent of sweetness and hope. McCann's compositional style on both selections brings new textures and feels to the album's overall flow. Making it into an impactful journey through both playing and the depth of composing.

McCann's tribute to the late saxophonist Lee Konitz in "Lovely Thing" is a delightful aperitif that dances around your taste buds, a contrafact on "What Is This Thing Called Love" that genuinely captures Konitz's enduring legacy. Here McCann speaks with a focused bebop meets modern jazz stance to perform a splendid solo that guitarist will not want to miss.

The song "Blues for O.M." pays homage to the French composer Olivier Messiaen by employing the fourth mode of limited transposition in a blues form. McCann has created a veritable coq au vin here, a traditional dish presented with a unique, exotic twist. An outstandingly fresh approach to the well-explored jazz blues progression with excellent playing and listening skills by the ensemble.

**Without Question** ends with "Erase the Hate," a song that, much like a perfect cup of espresso, leaves you with a lingering aftertaste. It's a plea, a promise, and a beacon of hope that guides us into the future.

McCann's album **Without Question** is a journey, a culinary experience of sorts. Each track is a well-crafted dish, served with a side of McCann's personal narratives, inspirations, and reflections. It's an album that offers a delightful feast for the senses and a banquet for the jazz soul.

Pete McCann 'Without Question' promo

