

## Praise for One Small Step by Dennis Winge Trio

(full reviews)

*One Small Step* is a new body of work by the Dennis Winge Trio. The name comes from the 14th track - but this is a little ironic as stylistically, this album is *extremely* varied. There's a nod to a lifetime of influences, not just in terms of jazz guitar, but also in composition and overall mood. With such a varied, genre-spanning selection of music, it is hard to pin any all-encompassing labels onto the work. The common thread is perhaps Winge's ability to paint a picture; to send the listener to a time and place beyond the here and now. All 19 tracks were composed by guitarist Dennis Winge, who is joined by Tom Wescott on bass, Joel Carberry on drums and Greg Ezra on percussion. The entire work is in fact a live studio recording, deliberately eschewing any overdubbing, as Winge states "to deliver fresh, creative music without pretense".

The overall impression is great. A tight trio playing very well indeed. When they are in the zone, they are magnificent.

There is a distinct change in mood as each track passes, but also often within tracks. Candy sweet melodies give way to melancholic blue notes (*Dusty Ol' Village*), whilst clean guitars gradually crescendo into overdrive, entirely changing atmospheres in the space of a few bars (*Green*). With such a wide variety of music it's not surprising some things appeal more than others, but for me the band are at their absolute best when they are able to let rip, such as in *Across the Hot Sand*.

The album starts with the gently breezy *Sun & Waterfalls*, featuring some greatly melodic playing over a walking acoustic bass, very much in the feel of the 1950s and early 60s tracks popularised by the likes of Tal Farlow and Les Paul. But this jumps immediately on track two to the laid back bluesy fusion funk of *Swampness*. Electric bass replaces the upright, and harmonic and melodic considerations are overshadowed by rhythmic ones.

There are several fusion tracks like this. 'Three Card Shuffle' opens side two - a fast paced bluesy rocker that would have been a perfect starting point for one of Miles Davis' rock explorations of the early seventies. John McLaughlin is clearly an influence. And there are plenty of stripped down Mahavishnu Orchestra moments, the wonderful other-worldly *Puravi Sketch* being a great example, with outstanding performances from all involved); the music has a spiritual, meditative feel - underlined by the Mandala of the album's front cover. But this is no surprise, Winge also performs under the spiritual name Damodar Das. As Dennis explains, "*Puravi* is an Indian 'thaat' (like a scale or mode) which has no Western equivalent. It goes C Db E F# G Ab B C. I am into Indian style sacred chanting called 'kirtan' so that's where I came across it."

Despite the spiritual elements to *One Small Step*, there is plenty that is down to earth. chicken pickin' country gets a rockabilly shuffling snare on *Tahitian Block Party*, whilst the deliberate dischordance of 'Super Slow Blues' puts a little classic rock grit into the mix, the result reminiscent to mid seventies Jeff Beck. *Dusty Ol' Village* is totally traditional and places us firmly in mid 20th Century small-town America, though this track contains some of Winge's most appealing soloing.

For the jazz guitar purists, the title track, *One Small Step* delivers. It's a lightning fast slab of bebop, well performed and wearing a bow tie. This is not, though, for me at least, the stand-out track of the album. *Loop 26*, on the other hand, is slower, yet equally sophisticated. Shades of Les Paul with a very interesting 9/8 time signature - though with no emphasis in threes.

The majority of *One Small Step* is uptempo, but there are ballads too. *Plumage* is slow and lush : brushes on the drums, upright bass, and a heavily chorused guitar. Music doesn't get much more laid back than this. *Morning Mist* is perfectly titled, a soundscape evoking sun burning away the first

dampness of the day. Something about it (a combination of the Hendrixy rotovibe guitar, the 'purple hazy' octaves on the bass, and splashing cymbals) give it a somewhat slightly psychedelic feel, as if we are seeing morning mist it is definitely after having been up all night!

Winge dips into Caribbean and Latin American musical styles: the beautiful, but slightly melancholic *Bossa*, the Calypso of *Song For Max*, and the upbeat *Ska Blues*. This owes more to Two Tone than the earlier ska jazz of the Skatalites or Ernest Ranglin; definitely more modernistic in feel, but with some great performances from all three musicians. Then there is *Timbafunk*, an Afro-Cuban fusion track with a strong dose of Latin rock.

But World influences don't stop in the Americas. *Across the Hot Sand* is an urgent fiery D harmonic minor vamp, with a strong Middle Eastern or North African feel enhanced by some great percussion work by guest Greg Ezra, who along with Carberry lead the music up and down. There is a great bass solo by Wescott, who in my opinion is at his best when playing electric bass on tracks like this. The guitar work is inspired, slightly overdriven and played with passion. This is a great example of the band being in the zone, and, for me, one of the best tracks on the album.

Classical influences are also in evidence: notably the Bach-inspired 3 vs. 2, with its unimposing drums and percussion, and steady walking acoustic bass. *Green* also has some of this Baroque feel, but fuses this with cool jazz, no doubt with guitar inspired by the title's namesake. But, as is often the case with this album, we don't stay anywhere too long, and cool jazz builds and builds, briefly edging into soaring rock a la Carlos Santana. And it works really well.

Although most of the guitar work was performed with electric instruments, there is some wonderful folksy acoustic playing on *Family Time*. I wonder whether this is a nod to the British folk rock band Family? It is perhaps the least jazz track on the album, with a gorgeous acoustic guitar kicking the song off, before laying down some equally tasteful solo phrases. Another great fretless bass solo, too. A very joyful piece of music!

This is a hugely enjoyable album, with enormous variety in style. Winge demonstrates his wide appreciation of all genres of guitar playing and music in general. He seems deliberately unconstrained by 'jazz', 'rock', or the other 'boxes' we put ourselves in, and the result is some really special music. It is intelligently conceived and passionately delivered. Stand out tracks are: *Green*, *Across the Hot Sand*, *Puravi Sketch* and *Loop 26*. But this ultimately speaks more of me than the trio. *One Small Step* will be available in February 2019 and is very much worth checking out! Have a listen and see what tracks stand out to you.

- Jules Brown, [www.JazzGuitar.com](http://www.JazzGuitar.com)

<http://www.jazzguitar.com/features/One-Small-Step-Dennis-Winge-Trio.html>

## **High energy original guitar jazz Dennis Winge Trio – ONE SMALL STEP:**

The Finger Lakes region in New York state (Ithaca, to be specific) is about three hours road time from where I grew up in Erie, Pennsylvania, but I can tell you right now that I never heard great guitar like Dennis plays back in my early '60's days... his guitar work encompasses several styles of music, all the way from rock/blues to funk, world and (as you'll hear) eclectic jazz... original tunes like the peppy "Ska Blues" (samples aren't up, as the album doesn't officially release until February, 2019; I'll come back and add them in as soon as I'm told they've gone live) will give you a clear vision of his total talent and dexterity.

Just to give you a sample of their wide-ranging abilities, I recommend you watch the video of the trio performing "Timbafunk", a tune that's also on the album...

...as you can see/hear, this talented trio can ride/slide/tip & rip better than most... don't hesitate to SUBSCRIBE to his YouTube channel, where you'll find lots more interesting (& sometimes challenging) videos of his work.

The trio play is definitely grand on songs like "Timbafunk", and enhanced even further by percussion from guest artist Greg Ezra on the album cut... this kind of tune puts the "ultra" in ultra-cool – it's also been thoroughly "GTO-tested"... in fact, this song is now part of my "permanent" favorites on my iPhone player!

Dennis knows how to provide astounding contrasts with his compositions, too... just listen to the beauty he creates on "Plumage"... the players he has with him are just as talented... Tom Westcott's bass and drums/cymbals from Joel Carberry make this tune come to life, and will relax you in most pleasant ways.

There's always one song that gets picked as my personal favorite, and of the nineteen tunes offered up on this fantastic double-CD, it is (unquestionably) the 5:58 "Super Slow Blues" that got it... there are moments on this one where I'm reminded of the big hit "Super Session" album, but Dennis and his folks wring every last drop of "da blooz" out of this piece... it gets hit with "replay" often, and I've no doubt this song will get HUGE airplay on stations across the country!

I give Dennis and his excellent players a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, with an "EQ" (energy quotient) rating of 4.99 for this superb double album... get more information on Dennis's website.

- Dick Metcalf, editor, Contemporary Fusion Reviews

## **Dennis Winge Trio/ One Small Step**

Dennis Winge, a top New York guitarist who had led three previous jazz albums, is well showcased on his new double-CD *One Small Step*. He is not only the lead voice in a trio with bassist Tom Westcott and drummer Joel Carberry (percussionist Greg Ezra adds some rhythmic color to six of the selections) but contributed all 19 originals.

Winge is a flexible improviser with a versatile sound, using distortion when it fits the music but also playing quite cleanly. With Westcott contributing stimulating and supportive lines that often pushes the guitarist and Carberry mostly supplying a subtle accompaniment, the guitarist is free to improvise, knowing that the foundation is very solid. He displays his own sound and never seems to run out of inventive ideas.

The trio covers a wide area throughout this two-CD set. In fact, the first three songs could each have easily set the standard for separate concept albums, whether it is the swinging “Sun & Waterfalls” (a likable original with an unusual bridge), the New Orleans flavored funky jazz of the well-titled “Swampness” or “Bossa.” “Across The Hot Sand,” a mysterious-sounding song which has a Mideast flavor plus a bit of Gabor Szabo, is yet another musical direction. Westcott’s playing is particularly rewarding on that piece, echoing the guitarist’s ideas and general feel.

The other selections on the first disc include the jazz waltz “Green,” a rollicking “Ska Blues,” the moody ballad “Plumage,” a playful and slightly hyper “Family Time,” the tricky (both in its rhythms and chord structure) “3 vs. 2” and the simple but jubilant party song “Tahitian Block Party.”

The variety and consistent creativity continue throughout the second CD. “Three-Card Shuffle” is a bit quirky and more complex than it seems at first. “Loop 26” sounds like a tape loop due to its eccentric rhythm, a purposely awkward pattern in 9/4 time. “Dusty Ol’ Village” is a lazy and good-humored piece that utilizes traditional chord changes and inspires some wailing guitar. While “One Small Step” is an uptempo relative of “Giant Steps,” “Super Slow Blues” is a lowdown and very passionate blues. The program concludes with the childlike melody of “Song For Max,” the complex Mid-Eastern-inspired “Puravi Sketch,” the Cuban funk of “Timbafunk” and the somber “Morning Mist.”

No matter what the style or mood, Dennis Winge and his trio excel throughout this program. The result is a very enjoyable yet unpredictable set of creative jazz.

- Scott Yanow, jazz journalist/historian and author of 11 books including *The Great Jazz Guitarists* and *Jazz On Record 1917-76*

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(excerpts of reviews)

Jazzguitar.com

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Contemporary Fusion Reviews:

The album is a “fantastic double-CD [with a] talented trio [that] can ride/slide/tip & rip better than most... [Winge's] guitar work encompasses several styles of music, all the way from rock/blues to funk, world and eclectic jazz...[and he] knows how to provide astounding contrasts with his compositions, too... I give Dennis and his excellent players a 'most highly recommended', with an energy quotient rating of 4.99 for this superb double album.”

Scott Yanow, renowned jazz journalist/historian and author of 11 books:

“Winge is a flexible improviser with a versatile sound [who] never seems to run out of inventive ideas. The trio covers a wide area [with] consistent creativity [on this] two-CD set. In fact, the first three songs could each have easily set the standard for separate concept albums. No matter what the style or mood, Dennis Winge and his trio excel throughout this program. The result is a very enjoyable yet unpredictable set of creative jazz.”