



**OMER AVITAL – QANTAR  
NEW YORK PARADOX**

**Featuring Omer Avital (bass, compositions), Eden Ladin (piano & keyboards), Ofri Nehemya (drums), Alexander Levin (tenor sax), Asaf Yuria (soprano & tenor sax)  
Available everywhere March 20, 2020 on Zamzama Records (in partnership with jazz&people)**

“One of the most exciting musicians to come onto the jazz scene in the last 20 years” – **DownBeat Magazine**

“One of the key figures in the new wave of jazz . . . an integral presence on the local scene . . .” – **The New Yorker**

“One of the most prolific, imaginative, and active figures in the bustling community of Israeli expats working in the New York jazz scene—he leads his own strong groups and works as a propulsive sideman in many others.”  
– **Peter Margasak, The Chicago Reader**

“I’ve always loved the finesse that shapes Omer Avital’s music . . . there’s plenty of passion on the table.”  
– **Jim Macnie, DownBeat Magazine (Four-Star Hot Box Review)**

“. . . fresh, sophisticated, authentic and – something that can’t always be counted on accompanying those other qualities – great fun to listen to.” – **Bill Beuttler, JazzTimes Magazine**

“Throughout his life, Omer Avital has been shaped by a variety of cultural fusions. He was born to parents of Moroccan and Yemenite descent. He grew up a Jew of Middle Eastern heritage . . . He was a classically trained guitarist who discovered a love for vintage bebop. He was a part of the first wave of Israeli jazz musicians to arrive in New York City, laying the groundwork for a scene that thrives today but was nonexistent then. And he was a pioneer in folding his cultural heritage back into straight-ahead jazz.” – **Shaun Brady, Jazziz (Cover Story, January 2015)**

“Jazz has been undergoing something of an Israeli invasion over the past couple of decades, and bassist Omer Avital has helped lead the charge. Of Yemenite and Moroccan blood, he integrates world- music elements, particularly those of the Middle East, into his jazz, constantly re-tuning and expanding upon his ideas.” – **Jeff Tamarkin, Relix**

“Avital is a superb bassist and composer. His playing is always engaging, punchy, subtle and supportive: the panoply of great bass playing. His compositions are sharp, full of surprises and a window on his love for his roots . . .”  
– **Chris Smith, The Winnipeg Free Press**

**Bassist/composer Omer Avital, one of the most celebrated and revered musicians on the global jazz scene, offers his latest creative tour-de-force, *New York Paradox*, to be released on Avital’s label, Zamzama Records (in partnership with jazz&people), on March 20, 2020. *New York Paradox* is the second album from Avital’s dream Quintet, *Qantar* (following up their self-titled debut), featuring **Eden Ladin (piano & keyboards), Ofri Nehemya (drums), Alexander Levin (tenor sax), Asaf Yuria (soprano & tenor sax).****

**Qantar is more than just another group, it is for all intents and purposes** a family and a community with its own customs, growing traditions, and even language (both musical and verbal). These five artists have formed a special friendship that projects a singular energy on the bandstand and on their recordings. Indeed, all are Israeli expatriates, all living in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn, all

regularly hanging out at their leader's home, sharing dinner, Turkish coffee, stories, ideas, joys and sorrows. This shared history, even though years apart, imbues this quintet with the key to Avital's music: the ability to bring the various rhythmic and harmonic vocabularies underpinning 20th and 21st century hardcore jazz expression to flow with a polyphonic attitude and musical multilingualism.

The recording of *New York Paradox* came together after three years of the guys playing together regularly. It was recorded in Avital's NEW studio/club/lounge - Wilson Live! in Bushwick, Brooklyn, in a very comfortable, homey environment, captured by the band's good friend, engineer Roy Boukris. Avital added, "we know the room as we have been playing here a lot in the past year and a half, and we recorded in the same room with no separation, no edits, no fixes; we just played the room as if we were on a gig."

#### **More on *New York Paradox* with Omer Avital:**

"Qantar has been working together for the past several years, traveling the world, rehearsing, and just as importantly, hanging hard. For this band, we don't use charts but rather learn the music by heart and create the arrangements on the spot, organically. For me as composer/arranger this is the best way to work since you get the best results when the musicians can tailor their parts to the music . . . also, the music becomes highly personal as everybody feels invested. Plus, learning music this way, you never forget it, which means less rehearsing and a much more natural feeling on the bandstand."

**Shabazi** – Rabbi Shalom Shabazi was a great and beloved Jewish Yemenite poet who lived in Yemen during the 17th century. I grew up on his poems and songs. It is also a name of a nice street/area in the south part of Tel-Aviv.

**Zohar Smiles** – One of my favorites - and a big favorite at gigs - written for my son when he was still little, around 2010/11. It is, of course, a very special melody that reminds me of the feelings I had during his early years, and his amazing smile. To me this is the best proof of godliness and true spirituality in life.

**NY Paradox** – I composed this one when we moved back to NYC in the later summer of 2005 after 4 years in Israel. The complexity of the city was very evident to me at the time . . . the beauty and energy I missed but also the harshness and the reality of the financial situation of living here. NYC presents an imperfect balance, a certain energy that can be exhilarating and taxing, that I have learned to deal with, and sometimes even beat, to an certain extent. I still have strong feelings towards this place that I love so much and have called home for almost 27 years, on and off!

**C'est Clair** – I started composing this in summer of 2017 first in Marciac before our concert and completed that summer in Israel. First titled "Waltz in F Minor," then another title, "Au Clair Du Lune," emerged. When I first recorded the composition with The Yes! Trio in Paris, Ali Jackson suggested changing the name to C'est Clair (named after a great couscous restaurant in Paris that the band loves.)

**Today's Blues** – Written sometime around 2010 this is a blues with a bridge. It moves between the Spanish modes and some pretty basic harmonies that are more African in nature, but still essentially a swinging blues.

**Just Like the River Flows** – When I first moved back to NYC I first played this tune with my band at Smalls. It is a Suite of sorts as it has different sections towards the end. It has a Middle eastern vibe and for me represents the way traditions keep flowing.

**It's All Good** – A composition from the late '90s, which was a complex period for me as my first band of four saxes, drums and bass was ending, a major record deal had been canceled on me, and things in general were changing. Musically, there was a lot of hip hop and groove orientated music going on, and less straight-ahead, so opportunities were dwindling. I often like to write tunes that represent a moment in life, what we were feeling, etc., this is definitely late 90's!

**Bushwick After Dark** – A minor blues that became the theme song and the unofficial title for our late night sessions at my club, Wilson Live. It's also a play on "Bohemia After Dark" g. It was on February 12 2016..... I have a voice memo from February 12, 2016, the day I heard that my mother, who was very sick at that time, was not doing well, and basically dying. We bought tickets to fly to Israel the next day and as I was packing and going down to the basement I started humming this blues riff . . . it's so strange how music comes about and goes in circles.

### **More on Omer Avital:**

Upon Avital's arrival in New York City in 1992, the rapid growth of Israeli jazz was set in motion in a profound way. Avital quickly forged an indelible mark on the scene, mainly through his legendary performances at Smalls, where he led one of the most celebrated groups of the time, a sextet with a front line onslaught of four saxophones (an early gem from this time in Avital's early days is the tune "Kentucky Girl", featured on the compilation, *Jazz Underground: Live at Smalls*, on Impulse!). "Years from now, when folks are remembering the early days of the West Village jazz haunt Smalls, bassist Omer Avital's name will be as synonymous with the club as Bill Evan's is with the Village Vanguard, and Thelonious Monk's is with the original Five Spot Café." - *Time Out New York*. The prolific Avital has released sixteen albums as a leader/co-leader since the late 90s. Through his recorded output and live appearances he has become a river of creativity, leadership, composition and as a conceptualist. Now, with his new label, Zamzama Records (in partnership with jazz&people) and his venue, performance space and recording studio in Bushwick, Brooklyn, Wilson Live, you can add entrepreneur to the list as well. "I started Zamzama to have a home for my old masters that I now own, as well as new recordings. Eventually, I'd like to have other artists on the label, and have a more seamless connection between the creative process and the production/distribution. Ultimately, it's a way to be free to create and release new music in the long run, and I am very happy to be in this partnership with Vincent Bessieres and his wonderful label, jazz&people. With Wilson Live I aimed to establish a creative home for musicians in Brooklyn and all of NYC; a club, a studio, a lounge with a super intimate atmosphere which allows music to grow and prosper," said Avital.

Founded by French jazz critic and exhibition curator Vincent Bessieres, former associate editor of Jazzman magazine, Paris-based jazz&people is devoted to present a diverse array of upcoming and confirmed artists from both the European and American current jazz scenes. Among its catalog of over forty albums are featured artists such as pianists Yonathan Avishai and Laurent Coq, guitarists Yotam Silberstein and Romain Pilon, the Gil Evans Paris Workshop under the direction of Laurent Cugny, the Jorge Rossy Vibes Quintet, and the Yes! Trio, featuring Aaron Goldberg, Omer Avital and Ali Jackson. jazz&people was voted "label of the year" by the Victoires du Jazz in 2017. "The jazz&people label has aligned over the months a series of amazing albums, and I'm not the only one to think so!" (Alex Dutilh, France Musique). Jazz&people is distributed physically and digitally by [PIAS].

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