

Will Sellenraad - Balance BIO

www.WillSellenraad.com

Hailed as a “hidden gem,” **guitarist/composer Will Sellenraad** has earned a fast growing reputation of being at the forefront of a new generation of jazz musicians. Known for his brilliant improvisations and his compelling, emotive compositions, this New York City native melds the various styles, phrasings and concepts of the jazz idiom with the raw elements of soul, rock and funk, to create a singular sound that is nothing short of inspiring.

“ . . . you will definitely be hearing more from Will Sellenraad” – Kenny Barron

The son of prominent New York artists, Johan and Ellen Sellenraad (who named their son after Willem de Kooning and Piet Mondrian), was destined towards music at an early age. Raised and immersed in the City's downtown art and music culture, Sellenraad was able to focus all his energies and talent toward the guitar. After being awarded numerous scholarships, Sellenraad graduated from the New School University Jazz Program, where he studied under many jazz giants including John Abercrombie, Gary Dial, Jim Hall and Reggie Workman.

In the mid-1990's, the guitarist landed the house gig at Visiones, one of New York's finest jazz clubs. Over several years of performances at the club Sellenraad developed a great musical kinship with fellow native New Yorker, drummer Eric McPherson and first-call bassist Kiyoshi Kitagawa. This great musical rapport led to the 1998 recording of his critically acclaimed debut album, Streams, which features a special appearance by Blue Note recording artist James Hurt.

“This disc was my introduction to Will Sellenraad; it would be nice to hear a lot more from him.” – JazzTimes
(on Star Hustler)

In 2002, Mr. Sellenraad recorded Star Hustler with his band Root Down, featuring Brian Charette on organ and Darren Beckett, of Ambulance Ltd., on drums. This album, which embraces the spirit of the great organ trios of the 1960s, creates compositions that legendary drummer Victor Lewis has hailed as “fresh... and taken with spontaneity.” Incorporating elements of soul jazz through to the Meters, Soulive and beyond, Star Hustler is truly music for all audiences.

A recipient of several grants from the New York State Council on the Arts, Sellenraad is a mainstay on the music scene in and around New York City, regularly appearing at storied jazz venues such as The 55 Bar, Smalls, The Blue Note, Birdland, the former Bradley's, The Iridium, the former Sweet Basil and many others. As a band leader, he has also performed at the Panasonic Village and JVC Jazz Festivals in New York and the Discover Jazz Festival in Burlington, Vermont.

“ . . . sophisticated harmonic thinking and a modern approach...As a guitarist, Sellenraad has an abundance of technique . . . there is an absence of grandstanding, and one always hears music first.” – Jazz Improv Magazine

As a sideman Sellenraad has toured extensively, and has played with some of today's most influential jazz musicians, such as Brian Blade, Victor Lewis, Dwayne Burno, Ben Street, Tommy Campbell, Garry Dial, Ed Howard, Adam Nussbaum, Nasheet Waits, Donny McCaslin, Gary Versace, Steve Wilson, and others.

In the Spring of 2009, Beez Wax records will release Sellenraad's much anticipated third recording as a leader, Balance, featuring his working quartet of many years: renowned saxophonist Abraham Burton, internationally acclaimed bassist Kiyoshi Kitagawa and the legendary Victor Lewis on drums. With compositions by Sellenraad, Lewis and Kitagawa, Balance is an extraordinary new CD release from this rising star on the jazz scene.

Some highlights on Balance include the title track which opens the album, and immediately showcases this band's collective mastery and Sellenraad's gift as a composer; "Nye", a funky bossa written for his wife; the absolutely stunning "Prayer" (with a nod to Elvin) that Sellenraad wrote after waking up one night at 3 AM with the melody in his head; and "It's Been A Long Time", a never before recorded Victor Lewis original that he composed roughly 30 years ago. Sellenraad explains, Victor wrote this . . . a really long time ago. I think it is one of his first tunes. He picked it out especially for this band." The album closes with Sellenraad's theme, "Left (Shout Chorus)" which he composed for the club Detour. "I played there a lot. It was the pass the tip jar song. I usually played it as a "theme" to end sets. Just something nice to have people leave with some positivity."

"I'm really coming from a heavy influence of Wayne Shorter, Duke Ellington, Victor Lewis, and some African music. I always try to write as simply as possible, and that's always the challenge, to keep it simple. I also really had these cats in mind as the music was shaping up," says Sellenraad on the conceptualizing and making of Balance.

Will Sellenraad will be performing throughout 2009 in celebration of the release of Balance.

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