

## BAKİ DUYARLAR

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Turkey has a limited reserve of jazz musicians, multiplied only in the recent decade due to local music listeners' broadened horizons. That was possible thanks in part to jazz musicians who work in the pop music industry, then move on to their beloved genre and thus familiarize more audiences with jazz -- a music "a little too overseas" for Turkey.

Baki Duyarlar, who just this year released his debut album, "Overseas," is one example of such a musician who works in not only the field of jazz, but also pop and various other genres. Duyarlar -- not to be confused with his father, Baki Duyarlar, a famous composer and oud player who has written over 500 songs, most of which became the essentials of 20th century Turkish classical music repertoire -- has been active in music as a composer, arranger and performer for nearly three decades.

"Overseas" is a five-track CD of original instrumental jazz pieces energized with the lively touch of funk. In it, Duyarlar is accompanied by the three other members of his quartet OnQ -- Stanislav Mitrovic on saxophone, Sean Rickman on drums and Kai Eckhardt on bass. Duyarlar composed and arranged all but one of the pieces on the CD, released in March via the label Ada Music.

Born in 1967 in Istanbul to a family of musicians, Duyarlar began playing cello and piano at the age of 11 at the Istanbul Municipal Conservatory. During his school years, he started working in jazz clubs as a pianist and gave concerts as a cello soloist and cello group leader in classical orchestras.

By the time the young Duyarlar was out of the conservatory, he was an avid pianist with his eyes on jazz, which led him to enroll in the Rotterdam Conservatory in the Netherlands. There, Duyarlar played at local clubs and bars. It was during his time in the Netherlands when he met saxophonist/clarinetist Mitrovic, with whom he co-founded OnQ, blending music from Turkey and the Balkans with jazz.

In 1996, Duyarlar decided to return to his hometown of Istanbul, hoping to break into the local music scene, and following his return, he quickly became one of Istanbul's most sought-after session musicians.

The prolific Duyarlar also did recordings for the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), played for live broadcast concerts in the Vienna Jazz Festival and toured the Netherlands with Turkish fretless guitar master Erkan

Ogur and his band Telvin. Aside from writing original songs, he made arrangements for pop singers and became a studio musician as well.

Duyarlar spoke to Sunday's Zaman about his new album, his outlook on jazz and his career in a recent interview.

What does the album's title, "Overseas," refer to? Does it suggest "music from overseas," or "music for overseas" -- or something entirely different?

Well, it is "overseas" because two world-famous members of the band, Kai Eckhardt and Sean Rickman, came to Turkey for the project from the United States. That was also the first experience for the group OnQ (which I formed in the '90s) until this album because I had always performed with European musicians. My dear colleagues Kai and Sean traveled "overseas" especially for this project.

A strong sensation of funk is truly prevalent throughout the album, except for one song. Who and what were your influences while writing these songs?

Yes, actually it is a jazz-funk album. There are many ideas about the social development of jazz music and many people think that jazz is finished, that there is no new music on the streets, etc... I believe those people don't go out anymore because there is plenty of new and beautiful music on the streets. Actually, jazz music goes on.

My music is not bebop, but you can still hear the bebop in the grammar. What influences me is the life itself, everything I live, the city, good times and bad times. Finally, my music is not pastoral because I don't live that way.

How many years' effort is there behind the album? Did you leave out any songs while compiling the track list?

When people see me playing piano or writing music, they say "how good and fast you are with playing, writing and reading [music]," that "in a few minutes you can do whatever you want." My answer is always the same: It takes 30 years plus a few minutes. However, for the recording sessions, it didn't happen that way. When I heard the guys would join my project, I wrote new songs in just a few days and had a one-day rehearsal, then gave the concert. We performed in the 20th Akbank Jazz Festival the day before I recorded "Overseas" with the band. We had to fill up much longer time than on the CD, of course. That's why, for example, I wrote a few arrangements on the tunes of Wayne Shorter and we also performed three tunes by OnQ saxophonist Stanislav Mitrovic. On



Turkish jazz musician Baki Duyarlar (L) and the members of his quartet OnQ in the studio during recording sessions for the album "Overseas."

# JAZZ MUSICIAN BAKİ DUYARLAR RELEASES FIRST ALBUM OF HIS 30-YEAR CAREER

'Overseas,' a five-track CD of original instrumental jazz pieces energized with the lively touch of funk, is the debut studio album of jazz composer, arranger and performer Baki Duyarlar, the son of well-known Turkish classical composer and oud player Baki Duyarlar

the CD I used only one tune of Stanislav's. "Uninvited," and my compositions.

Can you tell us about the recording process? How long did it take and where was it recorded?

The recording took only one studio day, 10-12 hours, and we made it at Babajim Studios in Istanbul. Everything was live; we didn't dub or use any studio tricks. After recording, the post-production took much longer than the recording.

You have been writing, arranging and playing music since the 1990s but this is your first-ever studio album with your own quartet. Why so late? Why now?

Now was the time [laughs]. Actually, I have been writing music since 1980, but I am old-

fashioned. When I write music on the paper, I feel like I have [already] recorded it, because I can keep it that way and I can replay it anytime and other musicians can read and play it as well. But, for instance, housewives don't read music now as much as they used to in the past. What I am trying to say is that people don't buy music sheets anymore because they don't need to read music to have music in the house. It wasn't like that 200 years ago. Of course, people have been buying recorded music for so long and listening to music anytime, anywhere. Now, my music is available for that, too.

As a jazz musician, you probably prefer playing live, rather than in the studio. Did your reluctance in releasing your first album have anything to do with this?

For me, music is a serious art form. Of course, there is also entertainment music forms, I admit, but personally, music listening needs suitable ambience, and concerts are still best, even if the sometimes horrible acoustics of some concert halls exterminate all the pleasure of it. Still, if people record music, they can play the album on any occasion.

"Overseas" came out in March. How was it received?

It has been very nice. Even though we haven't released it yet in Europe or America, I have received very nice compliments in Turkey and abroad.

The Turkish jazz music scene seems to be flourishing, particularly during the past decade. Would you agree? What do you think about the Turkish jazz music scene?

Yes, I totally agree. The number and qual-

ity of jazz musicians in Turkey are improving. We have incredibly good musicians. One of the reasons is that we had a jazz music department in a private university, but it was closed a short while ago. While the department was still active, we had an explosion in the number of jazz musicians. Now, there is no academic [platform] anymore. There is a lot to do in this matter in Turkey. If you don't have academic formation for jazz, it is not possible to talk about a Turkish or Anatolian jazz. Anyway, jazz is a universal art form. It doesn't need any national identity and an academy very much helps in bringing up new musicians.

What are you working on nowadays?

This year has been particularly productive for me. I already recorded my second album and I am busy with the post-production. The album contains much more Turkish music elements but is still very serious jazz. I play with Turkish colleagues such as Derya Türkan [kemençe], Cem Aksel [drums], Erdal Akyol [contrabass] and the album features Dilek Türkan and Azize [vocals and lyrics].

I also prepared new music for my latest project, "Colors," in which I am going to play with Eric Calmes from Curacao on bass, Enrique Firpi from Uruguay on drums, and Mitrovic on saxophone. I met them all in the Netherlands. Many colors meet in the Netherlands -- that's why I called the project "Colors." Our concert, supported by the Dutch Consulate General in Istanbul, will be on June 22 at the Akbank Art Center. The next day, I will do a studio session. If everything goes OK with the recording, I will release it next year.

## Jazz musician created by prohibition

You are member of a family of highly qualified and renowned Turkish musicians. What is your story of becoming a musician?

As all the members of my family were musicians, I really don't know when I started becoming interested in music. My academic music education started after primary school at the age of 11 at the Istanbul Municipal Conservatory. I attended the cello section but I was always attracted to piano. When I was 20, I quit my studies at the Mimar Sinan University State Conservatory and went to the Netherlands to study jazz piano.

What was your relationship with music like? How did you decide to become a professional musician?

I did not make that choice consciously; my family oriented me to music when I was a kid because they had seen me interested in music, playing music. It was forbidden to play jazz at the [municipal] conservatory and this prohibition made jazz even more seductive for me. I was 12 or 13, listening to some serious jazz and amazed by the fact that there were different kinds of music, other than classical music. We were not even informed of the existence of any other music at the conservatory. Now, I think [jazz] music is my favorite.

Do you think you are making the music you dream of?

I cannot really approach the music I dream of. When I imagine the music, it plays much better. I believe I'm moving towards it -- I hope...