

Dave Harrington



Credit: Spencer Zahn

Dave Harrington's latest album, *Pure Imagination, No Country*, is a work of tremendous strength and immense subtlety, an axis mundi oasis where all points intersect, a fearless synthesis of genres and psychic states.

PINC further refines concepts that populate Harrington's slipstream of work. If post-genre fusion is a popular aspirational ideal for artists opting out of antiquated boxes, Harrington has long existed in those vortices of sound. He started as a jazz bassist steeped in the experimental New York world of Bill Frisell and John Zorn. Stints followed in psychedelic and noise bands, which led to the 2011 debut of Harrington's revered *Darkside* project with long-time collaborator, Nicolas Jaar.

Switching instruments, Harrington became one of this century's most unlikely guitar heroes, blending avant-garde improvisational jazz roots to psychedelic touchstones like Jerry Garcia and David Gilmour, to sophisticated dance-floor burners. While this album doesn't necessarily sound like a *Darkside* record, it exists at a different axis in the same continuum. Harrington uses guitar as a lead voice, sculpting and creating a new core language with a gifted cadre of players including vibraphonist Will Shore, synth bassist Andrew Fox, drummer Samer Ghadry, and post-rock polymath Lars Horntveth of Jagga Jazzist.

Rather than set ostensibly contradictory sounds on a collision course, Harrington's compositions connect things at a structural foundation—the scaffolding that supports music rather than the superficial facades wrapped around it. So this album translates the groove elements of *Bitches Brew* to the improvisatory and atmospheric components of the canonical ECM Records; it sutures Joe Pass solo

records to a motorik Krautrock propulsion. At other times, Harrington's guitar recalls Dungen and their Swedish psych-rock inspirations, Pärson Sound and Träd, Gräs & Stenar.

It's jazz in the purest form, which is to say, jazz as praxis of liberation. Harrington embodies the notion that you have to master the rules to artfully ignore them. A song like "Then I Woke Up" could theoretically be a Grateful Dead cover of a Neu! song, but upon closer examination, it can't be. It's too modern, suffused with electronic flourishes and contemporary rhythm. "Patch One" combines ambient washes with dark lunar spaces before building into a frenetic psychedelic freak-out. The one-two outro flurry of "No Country" and "Pure Imagination" are both meticulous and patient blissouts, but still offer spontaneous telepathic communion. Just so things don't get too heady, there's a Willy Wonka interpretation.

You can't discount the natural chemistry bolstered by the band's long-time friendship and textensive bouts of touring. It's a tribute to close collaboration, where several tracks were recorded while the outfit was laid up in Belgrade, blessed with a few off days between an Amsterdam festival and a Serbian club date. Another swath was cut in New York after the initial burst of touring. The goal was to capture the performers speaking the looseness of their common vernacular.

The result is a glimmering dialect between light and dark, a communion that refuses false binaries and succeeds in creating a place of co-existence. This is instrumental music that refuses to live in a bubble, engaging with the palpable fear of the unknown but aware of the possibility that one can triumph over vague uncertainty and bleak reality—at least for a little while.

Pure Imagination, No Country rips the building blocks of the day-to-day doldrums apart and re-assembles them. In the process, it offers a soothing antidote to the madness, a waking dream where you open your eyes swiftly and see things with just a little bit more lucidity.

<https://www.facebook.com/daveharringtonmusic/?fref=ts>

<https://www.instagram.com/dharrington/>

<https://soundcloud.com/harrington>

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChZbYQ1_S1bUBqP8hixXqg