

Alon Nechushtan- *Venture Bound* (Enja Records)



By [Thomas Conrad](#)

The single most salient fact about current jazz is its ongoing globalization. Jazz is an open-ended, self-renewing art form that draws strength from sources far outside itself. Example: *Venture Bound*.

It is hardcore, up-to-the-minute small-ensemble jazz with a unique sonic signature. Alon Nechushtan was born in Tel Aviv. On “The Gratitude Suite,” the formal chiming of his piano introduction is overtaken by wheeling klezmer rhythms when the band kicks in. On “Dark Damsel,” Brahim Brigbane’s fidgeting oud, old and exotic and Middle Eastern, creates sinuous counterpoint with Nechushtan’s freeform 21st-century piano.

“Pome(grenades)” starts as a headlong thrust, but then it careens back on itself, like a Balkan circle dance.

Nechushtan now lives in New York and has internalized its unforgiving energy. He characterizes his album as “a continuous journey through a New York night seeking adventure.” Two of the city’s most steadfast saxophonists, Donny McCaslin and John Ellis, play on alternate tracks. Nechushtan’s nine original compositions are angular, meticulous and engaging. *Venture Bound* truly feels like a “continuous journey” because it veers down many city streets. **Everyone—including bassist Chris Lightcap and drummer Adam Cruz—takes turns leading the adventure, their edgy New York solos emerging from Nechushtan’s colorful ethnic context.** Both McCaslin and Ellis take their time and sweat the details. Nechushtan himself is so embedded in the album concept that you are less aware of him as a soloist than as an intelligence that ties everything together. But in fact his individual piano statements are varied, concise and complete, sometimes twisting long, fine strands (“F.A.Q.”), sometimes digging in and grooving (“Serpentrails”).

In the new millennium, many compelling jazz voices have come from Israel: Anat Cohen. The two Avishai Cohens (trumpeter and bassist). Omer Avital. Gilad Hekselman. Add Alon Nechushtan to the list.