

# Andre Ferreri Quintetto

MELODIC JAZZ, WITH TOUCHES OF TRADITIONAL, CONTEMPORARY AND FUSION

Launching his career after a year at Berklee College of Music touring with Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs, New York born, Charlotte NC based guitarist Andre Ferreri has a resume as expansive, freewheeling and genre transcendent as his compositional and playing style. Over the decades, he's worked professionally with an array of pop, soul and jazz legends, from Sam Moore, Chuck Berry, Little Anthony and the Imperials and Classics IV to The Platters, The Coasters, Herbie Mann, Dave Valentin, Bill Evans and Bucky Pizzarelli.

For 12 years, he led contemporary jazz ensemble Airstream as the main outlet for his eclectic original material and he is first call guitarist for his hometown Charlotte Symphony. His compositions have appeared on TV shows, in films and commercials and for years he produced sound alike tracks for the karaoke company Sound Choice. In 2008, Ferreri co-founded Laser Records, a label created to help musicians promote their music.

For all these vast accomplishments, nothing thrills Ferreri more – or makes him feel more creative, expressive and vibrant - than when he gets back to the traditional jazz and swing that shifted his sensibilities early on from 70's classic rock to the influences of George Benson, Hank Garland, Wes Montgomery, Pat Martino, Kenny Burrell and Joe Pass. His perfectly titled latest album Numero Uno – attributed to the Euro sounding Andre Ferreri Quintetto - brings him full circle, and is the culmination of the past four-five years of his life. He laid the foundation for his full-fledged return to traditional jazz with his 2015 album *Tributes*, which included a song dedicated to Pass.

From the bebop big band flavored opening track “Mighty Fine” – inspired by a friend he calls “Mr. Roy” - through the sultry and lyrical “Love Letter to Mary” (his wife), every note, chord and phrase we hear on the new collection has its roots in a 24-day trip in 2019 that Ferreri took to visit family in his ancestral home of Italy. He spent two years as a child living there as well. Technically it was a vacation, but he naturally gravitated to the clubs, where he heard some incredible straight-ahead jazz – and one night he sat in at Gregory's in Rome.

Another inspiration was the Blue Note Jazz Cruise in February 2020 (just before the pandemic) and where he met Kirk Whalum, his original choice to play on the track “Seasons.” Whalum was not available but Ferreri's longtime tenor sax colleague Ziad Rabie helps bring out the intensity of the emotions on that tune and throughout the project.

Other longtime associates that form the core “Quintetto” include acoustic bassist Anna Stadlman and pianists Mark Stallings, Phillip Howe and Sean Higgins, who each play on several tunes. Stallings also plays the Hammond B-3 on the barnburner “Uptown Swing.” Ferreri worked for the first time with Kobie Watkins, a well-traveled world-class drummer who has skinned for everyone from Kurt Elling and Arturo Sandoval to Sonny Rollins. Ferreri chose to name his group the Italian version of “quintet” because the project has a Euro-Italian feel to it and he wanted to pay homage to both his heritage and the inspiration he found in Italy.

“While I can attribute the inspiration for the songs on Numero Uno to these incredible travels, for me, it's almost like the music is pulled out of the ether, as if the songs are already written and I made them into music you can listen to,” says Ferreri, who wrote the songs in a two-week period in May 2020 and recorded over three days in 2021 at GAT3 Studios in Charlotte. “A lot of these tunes came quickly and easily, and my only criteria was that I was going to write a song every day. I didn't have an overriding concept, except that I wanted the project to be traditional jazz yet leaning towards the contemporary side of that. I gave the musicians my demos and charts, we all went into our secluded booths in the studio and got everything down in two or three takes.”



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## ON STAGE

Though he is in many ways a “musical citizen of the world,” Ferreri’s live jazz playing in recent years has mostly been in small clubs throughout the Southeast. In the Charlotte area, he played weekly for years at The Double Door, and more recently his go-to has been Middle C Jazz, where he plans to host the CD release party for **Numero Uno**. Regionally, he has performed at One Step Down in Washington DC, Myskins in Charleston, SC, PB Scott’s in Asheville, NC, Night Flight Café in Savannah and Little Points in Atlanta. The guitarist has also played at the Jacksonville Jazz Festival, Atlanta Jazz Festival and Charlotte Jazz Festival, and the Bechtler Jazz Series at the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art in Charlotte. Throughout his career, Ferreri (sometimes with his group Airstream) has opened for greats like David Sanborn, John Scofield, Earl Klugh, Spyro Gyra, and The Dixie Dregs. For Ferreri, the success of any live performance is based on the connection the band creates with the audience – and for him, that includes talking frequently to the crowd and creating set lists that build momentum, break down and build back up to create a unique musical energy flow that always ends on a high note.

## NOTABLE PERFORMANCES

Charlotte Jazz Festival - Charlotte, NC (w/ Dave Valentin, Flight 108 and Airstream)

Atlanta Jazz Festival - Atlanta, GA (w/ Projections featuring T. Lavitz)

Jacksonville Jazz Festival - Jacksonville, FL (w/ Flight 108)

Middle C Jazz Fest - Charlotte, NC (with Airstream)

Tribute to Joe Pass, Bechtler Museum Jazz Series - Charlotte, NC (Sold Out)

Tribute to Wes Montgomery, Bechtler Museum Jazz Concert Series - Charlotte, NC (Sold Out)

Halton Theater - Charlotte, NC (opened for Ear Klugh and Eric Marienthal performing w/ The Brubakers - sold out)

Holiday Blues - Bechtler Museum Jazz Series (Live Stream)

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## MUSIC

Just as he does during his live performances, Ferreri takes the listener on a dynamic emotional journey that balances up and downtempo tunes seamlessly. His opener “Mighty Fine” – the be-bop big band he penned for “Mr. Roy,” a “real character” who he sees at many of his hometown gigs – starts with a big drum flourish and piano punches, then eases into a lively percussive swing vibe driven melodically by the exciting duality of his guitar and Rabie’s tenor. Ferreri later takes a fanciful electric guitar solo on the Benedetto G35 over Sean Higgins’ spirited piano and the high octane rhythm section. Other highlights that showcase the band’s intensity are Rabie’s sizzling funk solo, Anna Stadlman’ plucky bass solo and Kobie Watkins explosive drum solo.

Although the moody, lyrical and deeply soulful mid-tempo “Seasons” was inspired by Kirk Whalum, whom Ferreri met on the 2020 Blue Note Jazz Cruise, Rabie does an impeccable job bringing out all the intended emotions and turning it into a saxophone ballad for the ages. The meditative, slow building track’s core is where Mark Stallings’ thoughtful piano harmonies lay a lush foundation for the sparkling sax/guitar duality of Rabie and Ferreri.

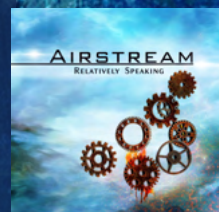
Part of the excitement of the narrative the guitarist builds throughout *Numero Uno* is the incredible mood swinging – and he artfully follows the smokiness of “Seasons” with the whimsical fast paced and (delightfully furious) bluesy jam “Uptown Swing,” a funky shuffle which reflects the spirit of Jimmy Smith and Stanley Turrentine. While more of that wild Ferreri/Rabie duality happens throughout, the track also features several punchy conversations with Mark Stallings’ burning Hammond B-3 – first with Rabie and later Ferreri in one of his most intense solo spots.

The guitarist dedicates the track to his recently departed friend and mentor Bill Hanna, a well-respected educator as well as pianist and trombonist with the Woody Herman Herd and Stan Kenton. Other can’t miss highlights include the beautiful ode to Ferreri’s wife “Love Letter to Mary,” the bustling,



playfully swinging and snappy guitar-sax driven “On the Move,” dedicated to Ferreri’s great influence Pat Martino and the title track “**Numero Uno**,” which begins in a gentle strum mode before building into a feisty swinger that includes numerous tempo, groove and harmonic shifts as it builds to one of Ferreri’s trademark speedy solos, followed by a rollicking low toned piano solo by Stallings. Ferreri shows a heart for musical social consciousness on “We Were All Children,” an elegant smoky and atmospheric ballad that was inspired by the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement. Its title is a pointed reference to the reality that we start out life as colorblind children before things happen to make us either prejudiced or tolerant.

Later in the tracking, Ferreri includes the interesting suite of sister songs “Making Major Changes” and “Making Minor Changes,” which to the ear of the non-musician might simply seem like cool ballads of varying tempos but create a feast of unique chord sequences for the trained musical ear. As Ferreri explains, “They follow the same chord progression. The differences that make each song unique are one is all major chords, the other is all minor chords. One is in 3/4 time, the other is in 4/4 time. Although the root notes of each song are the same, the melodies and tempos are entirely different. One melody moves linear up, the other moves linear down.”



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## THE EARLY YEARS

Growing up, Ferreri – who picked up the guitar at age 9 and got serious around 16 – was all about rock (early Beatles, Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix) before he got burned out on that and caught the jazz bug via everyone from John McLaughlin and Miles Davis to Wes Montgomery, George Benson, Joe Pass and others. After a year at Berklee – where he studied composition and arranging and went to school with future influential guitarists Kevin Eubanks and the late Emily Remler – he hit the road with Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs to the tune of 250 dates a year for four years. After living and playing in Atlanta for a year, he moved back to Charlotte, started gigging and recorded his first vinyl album *Projections* with Dixie Dregs keyboardist T Lavitz. His next group in the 80's, an intricate fusion ensemble called Flight 108, recorded four more albums that featured guests like Dave Valentin and Bill Evans. Ferreri's background includes work with hundreds of legendary artists and groups – including Brook Benton, The Chiffons, The Shirelles, The Platters and Jim Brock – and source music for shows on the Discovery Channel and Animal Planet and countless others. Other albums he recorded under his own name: *A Place in The Shade* (2004), *Spirit Feel* (2010), *Tributes* (2015) and *Airstream-Relatively Speaking* (2018).



## REVIEW

“Traditional jazz fans should consider themselves blessed that a guitarist like Andre Ferreri – who clearly can and has played every style with great success and stylistic abandon – has chosen to return to his passion for trad jazz, bebop and swing and grace us with a spirited and soulful, multi-mood driven album with his “Quintetto” whose title *Numero Uno* promises that he and the great ensemble will be continuing this vibe for a long time to come. Full of passion, explosive jamming, touches of big band and blues, tributes to his wife Mary and Pat Martino, a successful executed chordal experiment (*Making Major/Minor Changes*) and a sliver of important social consciousness, this is a powerful and empowering collection that showcases what happens when a musical veteran finds fresh new purpose in his solo career and engages longtime pals (and Kobie Watkins) to help him realize his vision that, like he says, almost seems divinely channeled.”

– Jonathan Widran, *The JW Vibe*

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