





Identity is a passport. Who and how we are creates the inquisitive ways we navigate the world. Musically that can mean a lifetime of practice, juggling the building blocks of bands, studios and stages, all while working towards shaping an identity that becomes an authentic creative voice. Artistic adventures are rarely linear, and so years ago en route to a scholarship to study electrical engineering, trombonist Doug Beavers turned his car around to begin a career that's culminated in this tribute to the star that brings life to us all - *Sol*.

Born into the cultural hotbed of Oakland, California, Beavers' upbringing took place within the storied musical culture of the Bay Area. Soundtracks to Sunday family barbecues included everything from jazz, classical, salsa, and rock, to classics by the Spinners, Gap Band or Earth Wind and Fire. Whether surrounded by live performance or the growing academic understanding of his instrument, Beavers' musical journey has always been about community, diversity, and the code switching required to embrace many eclectic artistic values along the way.

A master's degree from the Manhattan School of Music quickly led to joining Eddie Palmieri's legendary "La Perfecta" band and eventually to Beavers' current tenure as the lead trombonist for the Spanish Harlem Orchestra. As a leader Beavers has managed an influential series of recordings - the progressive minded [*Two Shades of Nude*](#)

(2010); the remarkable [Titanes del Trombón](#) (2015), a large ensemble work celebrating the trombone; and [Art of the Arrangement](#) (2017) his most recent tribute to some of the most prolific arrangers in salsa and Latin jazz. Each has the mark of an artist diving into his craft, a musician critically aware of the present tense of musical language because of an intense respect and admiration for its past.

Energized by the success of the 2019 album *Pop*, a project he produced and played on for the Yellow House Orchestra, Beavers traveled for a "writing-vacation" in the Spanish port town of Sitges. In a café facing the Balearic Sea as the sun began to fade, Beavers laid out a series of manuscripts that would eventually become *Sol*. "It was the vibe of the sun basically telling me everything is going to be OK. I just took my score paper and the music immediately started coming out," he remembers. For Beavers, *Sol* carries sequential meanings: a vivid reminder of his time in Sitges, a need to explore his love for R&B music, and the importance of honoring the trajectory of his creative compass.

If you covet musical alchemy, the 1970's was your kind of decade. Cross fertilization of styles, with musicians hopping

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from band to band was the experimental norm. Epitomizing that was the Fania All Star band and "Latin Soul," a mixture of rock, soul and R&B, infused with the energy, sophistication, and improvisation of Latin music. Fifty years later we have Doug Beavers, who in his third decade in the business is inventing a new sound for a new generation of listeners by bringing back the enduring ideal that good music matters. "I want these songs to become part of people," he hopes, adding "I want this music to stand on its own and I want people to love it for a very long time."

Sol is more than just the manifestation of meaningful influences gathered throughout a career. Here are songs that express the refreshed identity of an artist willing to experiment by molding cherished genres into a hybrid form of popular music. Honoring soul and R&B from the 70's and 80's, *Sol* revisits the science of making hits from addictive bass riffs, sophisticated horn arrangements, and the endurance of African rhythms that continue to permeate every aspect of American music. "I'm not trying to prove a point," Beavers says, "I'm just writing music with strong structures, scintillating harmony, and being clear about what I'm trying to say." Catchy, complex, and accessible, Beavers employs his



considerable skills (composer, arranger, bandleader, mix engineer and producer) to create music that will touch your heart, make you want to dance, all while feeding your soul.

Launched by the bass riff from *Happy Feelings*, a 1977 hit from the Philadelphia funk group Maze, *Sol's* title track features the tranquil vocals of Jeremy Bosch lifted by deft horn arrangements and salsa refrains before ending with a polished solo by guitarist Mike Ciro. As dynamic and complicated as love itself, *Mia* shifts between pensive and jubilant moments, with Carlos Cascante providing the lead vocals and earnest lyrics for the song. Balancing just the right amount of pop, salsa and R&B, *Clarity* finds vocalist Bosch surfing above an infectious melody and shuffle beat, advising us to journey through adversity without looking back.

Interludes remain a potent aspect of Beavers' work, his intentional way to space compositions with thoughtful pauses before the next musical course arrives. *Jillalude* combines the beats of rapper/producer James Dewitt Yancey, better known as J Dilla, with a memorable melody you'd hear on a Jill Scott song. Symbolizing the unique progression of major seventh chords, Δ dips into a signature chordal device Beavers has loved using throughout his career.



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Capturing the smokey, gyrating flow of intimate salsa dancing is the mesmerizing *Sonic*. A sultry guajira rhythm circles the solo work of renowned vibraphonist Joe Locke, slowing to a bluesy montuno as the song winds down with Bosch's effortless improvisational *soneros*. Mashing together period accurate synths with the same silky vibes chords that enriched Roy Ayers' work for years, *Sunshine* is the album's anthem to summer fun. Think of an uptempo, Kool and the Gang playing *Summer Madness*, but with bata drums and the husky voice of Ada Dyer, the secret ingredient of numerous gospel, soul, and R&B hits.

Pasos is a nod to the lush brass harmonies and Latin rhythms Beavers arranged so artfully on *Titanes*, but with a pop sensibility supported by the crisp backing of pianist Yeisson Villamar. As if gently rising above the horizon, -11 elegantly comes to light, guided by gorgeous harmonies created by Beavers' perpetual mastery of orchestrating horn arrangements, which gently eases into *Eterno*, a sweet ode to the parental love and support Beavers has leaned on throughout his career. *Quédate* or "Stay," heads back to the romantic side of traditional salsa before the album ends with *Ride*, a full throated, mic drop moment letting you know exactly what Beavers is all about right now. Funky horn

patterns and Ruben Rodriguez' driving bass, punctuate a driving mozambique rhythm that eventually settles into a disco groove as Dyer tears into guitarist/songwriter Walter Park's lyrics on how to thrive in an era of social distancing.

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Sol is all about rekindling that connection, building community, bridging divides between people, and getting back to the values that produced songs that meant so much to so many people. Recorded and produced during a global pandemic, *Sol* arrives during a time of unprecedented political crisis, where connecting is challenging, and creating consensus feels harder than ever. But when you've built a career channeling the energy of live audiences, and the collective spirit of musicians into special recordings like *Sol*, creating a sense of family through music becomes second nature. It becomes your identity, your passport. So if like me, if you can't stop humming, singing and dancing to *Sol*, consider yourself part of the family.

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