

Bert Joris / Brussels Jazz Orchestra: Smooth Shake

By [JACK BOWERS](#)

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While much can be said and written about Belgian trumpeter [Bert Joris](#)' music, perhaps no one can more aptly describe the rationale underlying the Brussels Jazz Orchestra's new collaboration, *Smooth Shake*, than the composer himself: "A warm sound—that's what I had in mind for this album. A sound that envelops you, fills you with energy, like a meaningful friendship."

With that in mind, Joris (who bears a passing resemblance to the Irish actor Liam Neeson) wrote all save one of the album's nine selections (drummer Dre Pallemmaerts' busy "Brussel—Parijs") and arranged everything. To add an exclamation point, Joris solos splendidly on every track but one ("Mr. Dado"), complementing relatively brief but no less persuasive statements by alto saxophonist (and artistic director) [Frank Vaganee](#), alto [Dieter Limbourg](#), tenors [Bart Defoort](#) and [Kurt van Herck](#), trombonist [Marc Godfroid](#), pianist [Nathalie Loriers](#), guitarist Hendrik Braeckman, bassist [Jos Machtel](#) and drummer [Toni Vitacolonna](#). In fact, Loriers' solo on the chorale-like "Spaces" is so fleeting that one might reasonably characterize it as nonexistent.

"O.U.T." (Open Up Tempo) sets the tone for what is to come, the ensemble walking easily to bolster admirable brush work by Vitacolonna and solos to match by Loriers and Joris. "Smooth Shake," in 7/4, pumps more energy into the mix, with Joris and Defoort responding in kind, before the tempo slows appreciably on the lyrical waltz "Only the Honest." Following an exciting trip to "Brussel-Parijs" (and the last of Van Herck's two engaging solos), Joris turns to the blues on the sprightly "Spaces," to the ballad on "How Could We Forget" and to a variation ("Mr. Dado") of a song ("Mr. Dodo") written for a previous album by the BJO, *The Music of Bert Joris*, released in 2002. Joris rings down the curtain on the colorful session with the exuberant "Nasty Boy," written tongue-in-cheek for his son, Sam, and a shorter (radio edit) version of "Smooth Shake."

*Smooth Shake* marks Joris' fourth go-round with the BJO, whose musicians, he writes, "seamlessly pick up on my ideas and stimulate me to keep pushing back my own frontiers." That is clearly the case here, as Joris and the BJO combine to breathe life into music whose parameters are wide and whose rendition demands singular dexterity and diligence.

Separately, Joris and the BJO are first-class; together, they rise above that benchmark to create music that touches the heart and enlivens the soul.

Track Listing: O.U.T.; Smooth Shake; Only for the Honest; Brussel – Parijs; Spaces; How Could We Forget; Mr. Dado; Nasty Boy; Smooth Shake (radio edit).

Personnel: Bert Joris: composer, arranger, trumpet solos ; Frank Vaganee: artistic director, alto sax, flute; Serge Plume: trumpet, flugelhorn; Nico Shepers: trumpet, flugelhorn; Pierre Drevet: trumpet, flugelhorn; Jeroen Van Malderen: trumpet, flugelhorn; Dieter Limbourg: alto sax, clarinet; Kurt Van Herck: tenor sax; Bart Defoort: tenor sax; Bo Van de Werf: baritone sax, bass clarinet; Marc Godfroid: trombone; Lode Mertens: trombone; Frederik Heirman: trombone; Laurent Hendrick: bass trombone; Nathalie Lories: piano; Hendrik Braeckman: guitar; Jos Machtel: bass; Toni Vitacolonna: drums.

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