

**Bassist, composer, producer and music educator, Shimon Ben-Shir** grew up in Israel, surrounded by the sounds of Middle Eastern music. He first began playing guitar and taking lessons at the age of 12. In 1990 was one of the founding members of the Bustan Abraham Band, a Middle Eastern musical group led by the renowned Avshalom Farjun, who had toured the world and performed at many notable jazz and world music festivals. Shimon co-wrote the title composition Bustan, on their first album. In this setting Shimon began to develop and grow as a professional bass player. Shimon came to Boston to attend the jazz program at Berklee College of Music in 1991. Since that time he has immersed himself in the New England music scene, playing in a wide range of bands covering diverse musical genres, including big band, straight ahead jazz, blues, rock and pop in clubs as well as on television. He graduated from Berklee in 1994.



Shimon joined the What's New Jazz Ensemble, a composer collective based in Boston, MA just prior to graduating from Berklee. There he contributed original compositions to favorable reviews. Shimon devotes time to teaching students of all ages, giving private bass and guitar lessons and, serves as an educational leader to jazz and blues ensembles at the John Payne Music Center in Brookline, MA. Although a teacher Shimon remains committed as a student of the bass and continuing his studies with Oscar Stagnaros, Bruce Gertz and Charlie Banacus. In 2002 Shimon released his first album "Shades," with the Shimon Ben Shir Group on the Nada Label. "Shades" received positive reviews in the Boston area newspapers as well as a feature article in the Boston Globe. The group performed at Ryle's Jazz Club, The Acton Jazz Café, Bob the Chef's and many other notable venues throughout the Boston area. Most recently Shimon produced and recorded the Shimon Ben Shir Groups latest CD, "Ways." He also composed the majority of the tracks and his bass playing is featured throughout the album. The newest offering shows a true evolution from "Shades," while incorporating the vast musical styles that Shimon has absorbed on his life-long musical journey. The music of Shimon Ben Shir is a continually evolving project, growing in many different ways and always with a unique, distinctive sound that is only Shimon Ben-Shir's.

# Other Members of the Shimon Ben-Shir Group

## **Duncan Martin: Saxophones**

Saxophonist Arranger and Composer A New England jazz stalwart for 40 years, Duncan Martin is an active teacher as well as performer. He is conductor and arranger for the John Payne Saxophone Choir, which has appeared at the Regattabar, Ryles, the Tam, and Sculler's, three times performing with President Bill Clinton. Duncan is also a member of the septet Pzazz and leader of his own quartet.



## **Diane Wernick: Saxophones**

Received her B.A. in Jazz Education from North Texas State University and her M.A. in Music Performance from Northern Illinois University. Diane's teaching experience includes: JPMC since 1994, teaching saxophone, clarinet, and flute, The Berklee College of Music's Ensembles department, and Directing the Middle School Jazz Band at Buckingham Browne & Nichols. Twenty years of teaching and performing make her comfortable working with a variety of musical settings including jazz combos, swing big bands, sax quartets, and woodwind ensembles.



## **Diana Fischer: Keyboards**

Pianist/vocalist Diana Fischer received a Bachelor's in Jazz Performance from the New England Conservatory of Music where she studied with Tom McKinley. She has an extensive background in classical piano and voice.



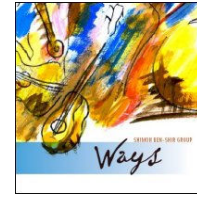
## **Ricardo Nhuch: Drums**

Originally from southern Brazil and has been living in the US since 1995. In Brazil he worked and toured on a regional level. In 1995 he moved to the US to broaden his musical horizons. Ricardo has played and studied both in Brazil and US, with John Ramsay (Berklee College of Music), Jon Hazilla (Berklee and NEC) and Gary Chaffee (former teacher of Vinnie Colaiuta and Steve Smith). He has experience recording as a session drummer and he teaches throughout Massachusetts.



# Reviews

## Ways



### **September 2007 issue of Improvizazzation Nation.**

This CD is pure joy to listen to, whether you're a hard-core jazz fan, or only a casual passer-by. The brilliant splashes of color on the CD jacket give you an indicator of the life contained in the music, but once you pop it in the tray & begin spinning the title track (which opens the experience), you'll find yourself fully engaged & enchanted. Ben-Shir's bass (and guitar) talents are fully revealed on the second cut, "Jochebed"... it's a bit hard to describe, as there are solid rhythmic foundations in the Middle East, but then John Frazee's horn kicks in, & you feel like you're in th' middle of the Caribbean somewhere. Itemizing each of the pieces would be like "giving the secret away", and you wouldn't want that - it would be like telling the end of a movie... and, that's what this beautiful musical experience reminds me of... a well-crafted tale that invokes memories seated deep in your psyche, bringing each of the emotions you experienced back in new ways. Absolutely stunning jazz, nothing pretentious, & very enjoyable. I especially enjoyed the highly energetic "Four Score", the "deepest" jazz cut on the album. I've no doubt that listening to these folks in a live setting would make you come away ready to overcome all the evil in the universe. I give it a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMEND

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### **MISH MASH Reviews**

It's always nice to begin things with the unexpected. The title track of the Shimon Ben-Shir Group's album Ways starts with a whistle and a shout of "Flamenco!" And while the beat that follows is Latin in nature, the song doesn't exactly sound like traditional flamenco, at least none that I'm familiar with. Instead, the band launches into a diverse smooth jazz fusion which travels the world over in its influences. From there the band moves into even more exotic territory, borrowing and blending a host of sounds, rhythms and styles from every corner of the planet. The great thing is that it's a fun exploration that avoids getting bogged down in pretentious jazz over-indulgence. The band is tight and skilled, but they don't have to go out of their way to prove it.

Mandate: Jazz Crusaders

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### **Midwest Record**

With a hot bass player leading the way, this crew jumps into their second set of internationally flavored jazz that swings and sets the paces nicely. Transplanting from Israel to Boston in the 90's to go to music school, Ben-Shir comes by his international chops honestly and organically as he grew up around a crucible of world sounds. Mixing it with bop moves, this contemporary jazz outing takes you to places you ears will dig. (BenShir Music)

## **John Book, Music For America**

Great music, played for the sake of beautiful jazz unity.

The bio for *Ways* (Ben-Shir Music) says the album is like encountering a friend you haven't seen for a while. While I had never heard of The Shimon Ben-Shir Group before, their brand of laid back jazz does sound familiar and warm, but not too lazy to where it becomes smooth jazz. The core of the music is Ben-Shir's bass work, where he goes back and forth between fretless and fretted, and he surrounds himself with an incredible range of musicians who fortunately know what they're doing. A piece such as "Jochebed" shows how diverse his music can be, where the meat of the song (the melody) sounds beautiful like a Pat Metheny song, but the soloists add their own flavor, especially trumpeter John Frazee. When he plays, he adds a bit of color to an already vibrant portrait, and in a way sets himself from the rest for about a minute before moving away and allowing everyone else to play. Everything on this album is fairly mellow, nothing excessive or out of the ordinary. While some of these songs could appeal to smooth jazz fans, there's a bit more going on than the usual. One can say that *Ways* is jazz on cruise control, moving the seat back and letting things come as they may, but Ben-Shir pushes himself and everyone to do their best, and they all play for the sake of beautiful jazz unity.

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## **Edward Blanco, Ejazz News.**

"Ways", the title track opens up with the elegant voice of Milstein's flute backed up by strong bass line work from Ben-Shir and supported by Wernick's sax phrasings in an obviously worldly but beautiful tune. The leader introduces the following track, "Jochebed," later engaged by trumpeter John Frazee in a rather melancholy Middle Eastern-tinged sounding number. The tunes "Do It," "Gliding," and "Orange Sky," while very different in melodic styles, all seem to fall within the world jazz theme of the album. There are two tracks however that break from the theme and can be considered straight jazz. "Four Score," is a burner of a track showcasing an outstanding performance from Duncan Martin on the alto and Fischer on the piano. Ben-Shir saves the best for last in the melodic-rich Latin style rhythms of "Circle," containing a stylish Ben-Shir bass solo, Martin's tenor phrasings, and a lively percussive beat provided by Jody Bregler on the drums. The conclusion, The Shimon Ben-Shir Group delivers a world-class performance in a compelling session of world jazz rhythms that will appeal to the jazz aficionado and average jazz audience alike. A definite thumbs up from this jazz critic.

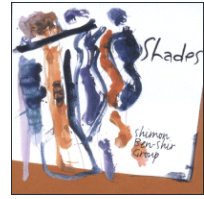
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## **Cameron Blades -WORLD RHYTHM WEBZIN**

The main template of the group is rooted in Jazz (Bebop to be more specific). They tend eschew the more fringe elements of Bebop though and stick close to head arrangements and melodies. The rhythms keep on the fluid side without losing the groove. The groups love and understanding of Latin and Middle Eastern music is also evident and give the sound a very pleasing yet interesting tone. This keeps the music dynamic without sounding to "out there" for some people's ears. Although more easy-listening than some may prefer for their Jazz diet, the Shimon Ben-Shir is certainly does not come across as background wallpaper but rather as a nice way to unwind from a hard-working day.

# Reviews

## Shades



### **The Boston Globe, By Steve Greenlee**

"A joining of jazz and Jewish Music"

"The music of Ben-Shir, whose material is rooted directly in bop. But even though Shimon find himself aligned with mainstream jazz, he says it would be unnatural for him not to fold in music of the Middle East – or that of Latin America."

"In Ben-Shir's music, the influence is subtle. Tunes on his album "Shades" are not recognizable as derivative of Middle East until you pay close attention to melodies and chord changes."

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### **"Shades" CD Review Brookline Tab!**

"Bassist-composer Shimon Ben-Shir must not have been paying attention the day it was explained that his instrument was a member of the rhythm section. Because even though saxophonist Duncan Martin take care of the most playful melodies here and both pianist Nicholas Mustelin and guitarist Mark Michaels have their turns at melodic soloing, it's Ben-Shir who, when not driving the beat with his precisionist, fluidly take over the lead, sometime alone sometime in unison with another band-mate. Most of the original tunes are from the straight ahead or softly swinging school of jazz. The composition "Oasis" sticking out like a pretty middle eastern flower, a little reminiscent of Yusuf Lateef's version of "Love Theme from Spartacus." The guitar-filled "One of us" provides a lovely flight of fancy."

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### **The Boston Globe, Go! Wednesday**

"Shimon Praise"

"We decided to listen to the disc and determined t... "We decided to listen to the disc and determined that it is indeed worthy of praise, if you on the hunt for some silky, Latin-tinged jazz"

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