

# HARD TO COOK

# MICHAEL VALEANU



Do you know **Michael Valeanu**? In New York, everyone is after this young French lion who can play anything it seems, a great improviser and crafty studio musician whom you might have heard with piano genius Tigran Hamasyan, or with the solar diva, Cyrille Aimée, featured on two tracks of this album.

«Hard to Cook», a wordplay on French expression «Dur à Cuire» (tough cookie), is Valeanu's second effort to date, meant to please the most demanding musical gourmets. The ingredients of the feast come from everywhere: a pinch of Folk, a sprinkle of Impressionism, a generous spoonful of groove, and a minute knowledge of jazz guitar tradition.

Following the footsteps of Wes Montgomery and Jimmy Smith, of John Scofield and Larry Goldings, fed by the eclectism of the New York scene, Michael Valeanu chose the Hammond, Guitar and Drums trio to pre-

sent his music: the result is exquisite. This is the work of a virtuoso and the brainchild of a sophisticated producer. The purists will admire the matchless mastery of his trio featuring Jake Sherman on organ and Jake Goldbas on drums. The curious music lovers will savor a compelling blend of love songs, groove anthems and short acoustic poems.

## TRACKLIST :

- 01 - INTRO
- 02 - FLOATING ISLAND
- 03 - HARD TO COOK
- 04 - 20 YEARS
- 05 - NORWEGIAN OMELETTE
- 06 - BLOOD COUNT
- 07 - THOUSAND LEAVES
- 08 - FIRMROOTS
- 09 - HOW DEEP IS THE OCEAN
- 10 - PALERMO SEAPORT



## CONTACTS :

michaelvaleanu@gmail.com  
+1 (347)-430-1296  
www.michaelvaleanu.com





«Hard To Cook» is Michael Valeanu's sophomore effort after his debut «Tea Time». It's a dream come true for the Parisian who learned jazz listening to Wes Montgomery records. «I fell in love with the Hammond, that has the sonic breath of a whole orchestra, and complements the guitar most beautifully». To realize his idea, Valeanu led a triumphant «Kickstarter» campaign that allowed him to have complete artistic independence.

You have in your hands the work of an artist who haunted New York jams, played the 7-string guitar in a Brazilian Chorro ensemble, engaged the most virtuosic gypsy guitarists in friendly duels and trimmed his nails impeccably for classical etudes. He's also one of the very few jazz musicians to master the unique craft of studio work.

The two accomplices he chose are jack of all trades, masters of many, with groove as common denominator. On the organ, Jake Sherman can resemble Ellington's sax section on the gripping «Bloodcount», the fiercest of bass players on «Norwegian Omelette» or a gospel singer soloing on «Thousand Leaves». Jake Goldbas is another of these New York miracles: hard driving swing on «Firm Roots», irresistible groove on «Hard To Cook», subtle percussion work on «Floating Island», all these idioms seem to be like mother tongues to him, and he speaks them with infectious energy.

If those two weren't enough, the icing on the cake is none other than France's freshest diva, Cyrille Aimée; she's a moving wordsmith on «20 Years», and delivers a scat lesson on the odd meter arranging of «How Deep Is the Ocean». We owe to Cyrille Aimée the blossoming of Valeanu as a producer, which gives this record a unique flavor in contemporary jazz. One-take tracks such as «Norwegian Omelette» alternate with artfully produced ones, where Michael Valeanu adds layers of subtle orchestrations. Notice the perfect blend of Organ and acoustic guitar on «Blood Count», or the slide guitar of «Floating Islands» on a background of Folk guitar arpeggios.

The originals that Valeanu brought to the table are true to this eclecticism: A thoughtful introduction calling classical composer Leo Brouwer to mind, the exuberant groove of the title track, and the mark of Ravel's «Tombeau de Couperin» on «20 Years». The country scene conjured by Aimée's lyrics sheds a warm light on this very pure melody. «Firm Roots», «Blood Count» and «How Deep Is the Ocean» are hommages to the tradition that Michael Valeanu continues.

Literally translated in French, «Floating Islands» and «Thousand Leaves» are delicious desserts. It's not only nostalgia for French pastry: like the best of Chefs, Michael Valeanu aims to please, and with this tasty album, he has us craving for more.

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