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## CD REVIEW: Christian Sands Trio – Reach – (plus photo and report from Munich)

ON 16 OCTOBER 2017 • ( [LEAVE A COMMENT](#) )

**Christian Sands – *Reach***  
(Mack Avenue. Review by Charlie Anderson)

From the very first notes of the opening track, *Armando's Song*, Chick Corea's influence on 27-year-old pianist **Christian Sands** is fully evident. Throughout the album he is supported by Japanese-American bassist **Yasushi Nakamura** and former Yellowjackets drummer **Marcus Baylor** on an album produced by bassist, and Sands' boss/mentor, **Christian McBride**.

*Song of the Rainbow People* is a slow and contemplative composition with swells of intensity. *Pointing West* is one of two tracks to feature saxophonist **Marcus Strickland** and has a rocking melody that switches to swing. *Freefall* is, perhaps, the oddest track on the album which starts with an ethereal *Star Trek*-esque theme which soon develops into more of a space odyssey with Sands adding keyboard overdubs and Marcus Strickland adding bass clarinet into the mix.

The latin tune *Oyeme!* features percussionist **Cristian Rivera** and shows a Chucho Valdes influence in Sands' piano playing. Although this tune can seem repetitive in places, it's broken up enough to remain interesting.

One of the many highlights of this well-produced album is *Bud's Tune*, a *Honeysuckle Rose*-inspired tribute to Bud Powell which is a relaxed but hard swinging number that features a bass solo by Nakamura which could easily have been played by McBride. This is just one of eight albums Nakamura appears on this year as a sideman, not to mention his own latest album, *Hometown*, to be released in November.

The most radio-friendly track on the album, *Reaching For The Sun*, has some Metheny-inspired guitar work from **Gilad Hekselman** and some beautiful melody writing by Christian Sands. The Bill Withers tune *Use Me* sees Sands imitating his boss and mentor (who has covered soul tunes such as *Family Affair* and *Car Wash*), and features McBride doing a guest solo on arco bass.

*Gangstalude* is an upbeat, grooving tune that mixes Sands' soulful playing with Gilad Hekselman's guitar whilst the final track, *Somewhere Out There*, is another pop cover, a contemplative rendition of a tune originally recorded for the 1980s animated film *An American Tail*.

What stands out the most on this album is the virtuosity, the confidence and the sheer technical mastery of the pianist. The fluidity of his solos combines with a thorough absorption of the jazz tradition in a way that is both soulful and bluesy.



"This trio has the big auditoriums ahead of it"  
Christian Sands at Unterfahrt in Munich  
Photo credit: Ralf Dombrowski

## POST-SCRIPT

Our German friend Ralf Dombrowski was also completely won over by the Christian Sands Trio with **Jerome Jennings** and **Eric Wheeler** performing at Unterfahrt in Munich at the end of last week. **His full review appears in the [Süddeutsche Zeitung](#)**. This is a short extract, which serves as an appetizer for Sands' appearance at Ronnie Scott's tonight. Ralf writes:

*"Christian Sands has the ability to integrate and transform what the Petersons and Powells, Ellingtons and even the Mehlhaus, all members of the guild of piano greats, have done, and to formulate an individual message full of energy that not only leaves the individualism of others behind, but also points to where the future of the jazz piano is headed. This trio has the big auditoriums ahead of it, so it is our very good fortune indeed still to be able to hear them in jazz clubs."*