



On a Mission

The Avengers

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A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
by **Mark S. Tucker**
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The MoonJune Label has been uncovering ace guitarists all over the world and continues that practice with this enclave of serious American session guys clustering around Uruguyan/New Yorker guitar-whiz Beledo. Adam Holzman mans the combo's keyboards and acted as Miles' music director in the 80s, serving presently as a member of the Steve Wilson Band (ex-Porcupine Tree, one of a number of groups that saved progrock in recent years) after joining in with Grover Washington, Robben Ford, and others. Bassist Lincoln Goines has performed and recorded with a broad array of stellar names as well: Sonny Rollins, Gato Barbieri, Carly Simon, Mike Stern, and many more.

Drummer Kim Plainfield has been just as eclectic, working with Bill Connors, Kenny Rankin, Edgar Winter, The Pointer Sisters, Didier Lockwood, and so on. Beledo, not to be outdone, sat in with Hugo Fatturoso, Opa, Manolo Badrena, and numerous top-notch south of the border gents and outfits, honing a highly polished speedy set of chops that bear up extremely well in comparison to Allan Holdsworth. Roll all these highly experienced cats together, and you get a sound very much located in Gongzilla, Nucleus (minus the horns), Dixie Dregs, Weather Report, and any number of top-shelf fusion ensembles. It goes without saying, then, that melodic invention, technical prowess, vast shoals of improv, and endless convolutions are the order of the day.

There is a ballad, however—Marcus Miller's *Portia*—though the lyricality of several passages within other tracks serves as Romantic contrast to abstract and baroque main narratives, the intro to *After All* just one, a saunter along a mid-afternoon tropicale of hot springs and palms that slowly ramps up into a Soft Machine-ish tangle of interlocking lines, Adam Holzman becoming Jan Hammer-esque as Beledo zips along the trail. In this genre, nothing stays still for very long, everything an exhilarating mental travelogue of oncoming colors, scents, vistas, and upbeat emotions—tinged, of course, with dark peripheries here and there, shadows and intrigue every so often tracking the listener from a distance. One might even use *On a Mission* as party music...but only if the celebrants were very up, very hip, and quite intelligent, not to mention pleasantly buzzed and garrulous. It's that kind of CD.

Track List:

- On a Mission
- After All
- Exactly
- Portia
- Siddhartha's Return
- Rauleando
- No Big Deal
- Jimmy O'Donnell's Air

All tracks written by Beledo
except *Portia* (Marcus Miller).

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