



NGUYỄN LÊ

Guitars & Bass, Guitar Synthesizer, Programming, Composition & Arrangements

"A deep-minded musician, filled with mystery, whose playing is never meaningless" (*Télérama*)
"Magician guitarist" (*Jazz Mag, Guitare & Claviers*)

*Like a funambulist, Nguyễn Lê skips from
Rock burning intensity to Asian refinement,
from the meticulous search of new sounds
to the catching joy of improvisation.*

Born in Paris from vietnamese parents, he began to play drums at the age of 15, then took up guitar & electric bass. After graduating in Visual Arts, he majored in Philosophy, writing a thesis on Exoticism. Then he devoted to music, creating "ULTRAMARINE" (1983), a multi-ethnic band whose CD "DÉ" has been considered "1989' s best World Music album" Philippe Conrath, *Libération*.

Nguyễn Lê is a self-taught musician, with a wide scope of interests: Rock & Funk (Jim Cuomo, Madagascar tour 84), Jazz standards & contemporary Jazz (bass player with Marc Ducret, guitar player with Eric Barret), Improvised Music (Yves Robert), Singers (Ray Charles), Contemporary Music (André Almuro, Tona Scherchen, Marius Constant, Mauricio Kagel), Ethnic Music: African & Caribbean with ULTRAMARINE , Algerian with Safy Boutella & Cheb Mami, Indian with Kakoli, Turkish with Kudsi Erguner, Vietnamese with his "Dan Bau" (traditional one-stringed instrument) teacher Truong Tang.

In Sept. 87 he was chosen by director Antoine Hervé to play with the O. N. J. (French National Jazz Orchestra). Within this big band, he played with such musicians as Johnny Griffin, Louis Sclavis, Didier Lockwood, Carla Bley, Steve Swallow, Randy Brecker, Toots Thielemans, Courtney Pine, Steve Lacy, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Gil Evans, Quincy Jones. Nguyễn Lê' s work also deals with programming synthesizers, effects & computers as well as writing orchestral pieces: "PROCESSOR" composed, arranged & recorded on CD "O.N.J. 87" & "LUNIK II" co-arranged with Dominique Borker & performed by the O.N.J. 1989.

In Sept. 89 he records ULTRAMARINE's 2nd album "DÉ" &, in may 90, his first album as a leader: "MIRACLES" recorded in the U.S.A. with Art Lande, Marc Johnson & Peter Erskine. At the same time he works with such musicians as Michel Portal, Miroslav Vitous, Trilok Gurtu, J. F. Jenny Clarke, Aldo Romano, Daniel Humair, Dewey Redman, Andy Emler, Jon Christensen, Nana Vasconcelos, Glenn Ferris, Christof Lauer, Paolo Fresu, Kenny Wheeler, John Taylor ...

In May 92, after a month tour with Paul McCandless on winds, Art Lande (p), Dean Johnson (b) & Joël Allouche (d), he records his 2nd album "ZANZIBAR", which gets the "ffff" award by *Télérama*. In Jan. 93 he records "INIT", a trio with André Ceccarelli, François Moutin & guest Bob Berg, while setting up a new band on the music of Jimi Hendrix, w/ Corin Curschellas (voc), Steve Argüelles (d), Richard Bona (b). Since Jan. 93 he's been a frequent guest soloist of Köln's WDR Big Band, especially with composer/director Vince Mendoza. Nguyễn Lê plays on three of his projects: "Jazzpaña", "Sketches" w/ Dave Liebman, Charlie Mariado, Peter Erskine, & "Downtown", w/ Russell Ferrante. In April 94 he's the guest soloist of "The New Yorker", a suite by Bob Brookmeyer, with Dieter Ilg (b) & Danny Gottlieb (d). With these two musicians he set his first trio, & recorded **MILLION WAVES** (ACT 9221-2) in Dec. 94. About this CD, *Télérama* writes: "This trio brings him to some musical spaces which he had not even imagined, & which are pure poetry".

In the meantime, he's playing in trio with Michel Benita (b) & Peter Erskine, recording on Michel Portal's new album with Ralph Towner (g), & working with Ornette Coleman on one of his contemporary music pieces, "Freedom Statue". In June 95 he's invited by WDR Big Band in "Azure Moon", with the YellowJackets & Vince

Mendoza. In July 95, in Stuttgart Festival, he's one of the guest guitar players to celebrate the "Universe of Jimi Hendrix", besides Trilok Gurtu, Terry Bozzio, Cassandra Wilson, Jack Bruce, Vernon Reid, David Torn, Victor Bailey, Pharoah Sanders... Recently he has been playing with John McLaughlin, Michel Petrucciani, Markus Stockhausen, Enrico Rava, Ray Anderson, Kenny Wheeler, John Taylor, Dave Douglas, Wolfgang Puschnig...

In April 96, Nguyễn Lê creates **TALES FROM VIỆT-NAM** (ACT 9225-2), a project on Vietnamese music, with a 8-piece band blending jazz & traditional musicians. With stage director P. J. San Bartolomé, he starts "Of the Moon & the Wind", a complete show where traditional & contemporary vietnamese dancers are integrated to the "Tales from Việt-Nam" orchestra. The CD has received a great welcoming from international critics: *Diapason d'Or*, *Choc du Monde de la Musique*, *Choc of Year 1996 Jazzman*, *2nd best CD 96 for JAZZTHING (Germany)*, *Best CD 96 on radio TRS 2 (CH)*, "a minor masterpiece" *JAZZTIMES (USA)*.

On 4/97 Nguyễn Lê releases his 5th CD, **3 TRIOS** (ACT 9245-2), with Marc Johnson/ Peter Erskine, Dieter Ilg/ Danny Gottlieb & Renaud Garçia Fons/ Mino Cinelu. *JAZZIZ Magazine USA* says: "At times, jazz guitar can sound staid - but not in the case of N. Lê. He's forever breaking boundaries for our benefit". He has recorded 2 CDs with Paolo Fresu's quartet: "Angel" (2/98) & "Metamorfosi" (4/99). On 5/98, 6th N. Lê record: **MAGHREB & FRIENDS** (ACT 9261-2). An exploration of Maghreb musical traditions & a deep collaboration with Algerian musicians. "Far from a false world music, N. Lê simply touches, with force & intensity, to universality" F. Medioni. N. Lê produced the 1st CD of Huong Thanh, **MOON & WIND** (ACT 9269-2), entirely done in his home studio. He also has been nominated for the "Victoires de la Musique 1999" award. His last CD, **BAKIDA** (ACT 9275-2), based on his regular trio with Renaud Garçia Fons (b) & Tino di Geraldo (perc, dr) plus guests from all over the world like Kudsi Erguner, Chris Potter, Carlos Benavent... This CD has been voted "best jazz album of the year" by "CD Compact" (Spain). ELB, a new trio CD has just been recorded in Rainbow studios, Oslo, with Peter Erskine & Michel Benita. He's touring with Terri Lyne Carrington's band, with Geri Allen, Matt Garrison & Gary Thomas & plays with Maria Schneider. Sept 2002: 2nd CD of Huong Thanh **DRAGONFLY** (ACT 9293-2). In June 2002 he's invited by the Metropole Orchestra (NL) to play his music arranged by Vince Mendoza. **PURPLE** (ACT 9410-2), an album celebrating Jimi Hendrix is released in Sept 2002. In Sept. 2002 it's number 1 on the charts of UK magazine "Jazzwise". **MANGUSTAO** (ACT 9423-2), Huong Thanh's 3rd album, released in Jan. 2004, is awarded as "Choc de la Musique" by french magazine "Le Monde de la Musique".

With his old friends Art Lande, Paul McCandless & Jamey Haddad he releases in March 2005: "**WALKING ON THE TIGER'S TAILS**" (ACT 9432-2): "A universe where the alliance between acoustic and electric, improvisation and writing, inner delicacy and virtuosic expressivity reach the ideal balance." (Le Monde)

For his album **HOMESCAPE** (ACT 9444-2), released in 2006, he invited his friends, the trumpet player Paolo Fresu and singer and oud-player Dhafer Youssef to his homestudio. The duos express the multiple musical experiences and influences of the artists and are mixed with electronic sounds created by Nguyễn himself. The same year Lê was awarded the renowned "Django d'Or".

In 2008, after tours in US & China, he releases **FRAGILE BEAUTY**, the 4th album in collaboration with Huong Thanh: "simply an album that captures the heart from the first note and leaves it hungering for more as the last one fades" (All That Jazz).

On his latest album he joins forces again with American drum legend Peter Erskine and French bass virtuoso Michel Benita and takes a flight into one of modern jazz' most luminous visions: E_L_B inviting Stéphane Guillaume: **DREAM FLIGHT** (ACT 9467-2).

In 1993, the Frankfurter Allgemeine newspaper said of Nguyễn Lê's first appearance in Germany: "There is nobody else that plays guitar like he does!" These words still ring true today, a fact to be heard on his 2009 release for ACT, **SAIYUKI** (ACT 9483-2). For the acclaimed Parisian artist, new worlds are constantly unfolding and Lê is consistently able to amaze us anew with sound. This is even more amazing because he is already one of the great sonic explorers in the jazz world: one who embarks on flights of the imagination in order to investigate new combinations of sounds. Saiyuki is very explicitly a journey: one from east to west and west to east in, as Nguyễn Lê himself puts it, an "Asia without borders". In trio with the Japanese koto player Mieko Miyazaki and Indian tabla virtuoso Prabhu Edouard, his new CD for ACT takes off on a musical Silk Road that binds diverse Asian worlds together.

2010 **THE NGUYỄN LÊ SIGNATURE EDITION** (ACT 6004-2) was released: Much more than a usual "Best Of" album, on this double CD-set the musician themselves picked out 24 pieces, which he feels represent the most important, significant and personal selections from his repertoire.

Nguyễn Lê on ACT – Discography:

NGUYỄN LÊ SIGNATURE EDITION 1 (ACT 6004-2)

SAIYUKI (ACT 9483-2)

E_L_B Peter Erskine - Nguyễn Lê - Michel Benita: DREAM FLIGHT (ACT 9467-2)

Huong Thanh & Nguyễn Lê: FRAGILE BEAUTY (ACT 9451-2)

Nguyễn Lê Duos: HOMESCAPE (ACT 9444-2)

Nguyễn Lê Quartet: WALKING ON THE TIGER'S TAIL (ACT 9432-2)

Nguyễn Lê: PURPLE - Celebrating Jimi Hendrix (ACT 9410-2)

E_L_B Peter Erskine - Nguyễn Lê - Michel Benita: E_L_B (ACT 9289-2)

The Nguyễn Lê Trio: BAKIDA (ACT 9275-2)

Nguyễn Lê: MAGHREB & FRIENDS (ACT 9261-2)

Nguyễn Lê: TALES FROM VIỆT-NAM (ACT 9225-2)

Nguyễn Lê: THREE TRIOS (ACT 9245-2)

The Nguyễn Lê Trio: MILLION WAVES (ACT 9221-2)

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