



**GWILYM SIMCOCK "PERCEPTION"
(BASHO RECORDS SRCD 24-2) REVIEWS**



21/11/2007 **BBC Music Magazine, Gary Booth, Five Stars *******

British pianist Gwilym Simcock is the first jazz musician to be given a BBC Radio 3 Young generation Artist Award. It isn't surprising that he was the first to push through: he has the right stuff. A prodigiously gifted jazz improviser, he plays with a precise and poised classical touch. But Simcock also has that jazz thing, a two handed ability to plan his lines so that the hammers fall fractionally after your ear anticipates them, constantly creating delicious suspense that is always satisfyingly resolved. This debut album, with eight toothsome originals included in the ten numbers, shows him to be a terrific composer too. He can swing it like Abdullah Ibrahim or get introspective like Keith Jarrett. And on the strength of his treatment for "The Way You Look Tonight" add arranging to his portfolio. Simcock has made the complete album: but Perception doesn't sound like a demo or a showcase. It is more like **a superb statement of intent.**



16/11/2007 **John Fordham, The Guardian 4**

Stars*****

Twentysomething British pianist Gwilym Simcock has been linked with enough class acts to seem like an elder statesman already, but this mostly enthralling set (produced by Jason Yarde) is the first under his own name. Saxophonist Stan Sulzmann and guitarist John Parricelli join a band that also plays opposite Charlie Haden at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall tonight. Simcock is an awesome original, but he's a creative listener, too. There are echoes of piano bands including EST, the Bad Plus and Brad Mehldau's trio, and an infusion of South African jazz melody, but the elements are twisted and polished into dazzling new designs. The idiom-shuffling A Typical Affair develops as a storming piano improvisation that would make even Herbie Hancock and Simcock's UK model, John Taylor, jump. But Simcock's classical backup makes him a remarkably sensuous ballad player, too. **If this is just the beginning, the coming years defy imagining.**



25/10/2007 **Helen Mayhew, The Jazz Digital Radio Station**

"the best jazz release of the year by a very long way".

Yorkshire's National Newspaper



09/11/2007 **Andrew Vine, Yorkshire Post**

A stunning debut CD from one of the brightest young stars on the British scene. Simcock is a pianist of energy, inventiveness and drive who is also an excellent composer. All those virtues are on display in **a riveting set that dazzles from beginning to end.** Simcock's playing of his own tunes is wonderful and he displays ingenuity on two standards. Saxophonist Stan Sulzmann and guitarist John Parricelli are strong supporting voices, but it's the 26-year-old Simcock who deserves all the plaudits for a first-rate CD. **Rush out and buy.**

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26/10/2007 **Ivan Hewett, Daily Telegraph**

The 26-year old British pianist Gwilym Simcock comes garlanded with praise; he's the only jazz musician among the BBC New Generation Artists, and has been called a "creative genius" by Chick Corea. Fortunately, this first CD shows that Simcock's talent is broad enough to bear the wait of expectation loaded on to it. **This is impressive.** Simcock fashions intriguing musical ideas with ambiguous rhythms; he makes space for the band to shine (especially bassist Phil Donkin); and **he can spin an improvisation that builds intensity to an ecstatic high point. Simcock's harmonic and melodic resources seem endless.**



18/10/2007 **Alan Brownlee, Manchester Evening News**

SIMCOCKS' reputation spread first among his tutors and fellow students at Chetham's School, then to his fellow players and then - as he was recruited to the respective bands of Kenny Wheeler, Bill Bruford, Tim Garland (who wrote a concerto for him) - to the wider jazz listening public.

His debut as leader makes it clear what the fuss is about. An instinctive melodist with a distinctive touch, Simcock distills romantic classical piano through a jazz prism.

His musicians respond with their best work - veteran Stan Sulzmann has never sounded better (listen to his soprano on Time And Tide), while the understanding between Simcock and drummer Martin France is telepathic. **This is immaculate, airborne jazz, and almost supernaturally beautiful.**



20/10/2007 **Phil Jackson, Jazz Line Up BBC Radio 3**

knocked my socks off! - tremendous cohesion between all of the players



16/11/2007 **Jack Massarik, Evening Standard CD of the Week**

Rarely was any British pianist tipped for stardom more confidently than Gwilym Simcock, who now counts Chick Corea and Lee Konitz among his international fans. His early promise seems more handsomely fulfilled with each album. This latest one, produced by Jason Yarde, has Corea-like moments of Latinesque keyboard wizardry from the pianist but also highly original and unashamedly semi-classical English ensemble writing for a sextet featuring the versatile John Parricelli on guitar and the lyrical Stan Sulzmann on tenor and soprano saxes. This group appears opposite US bassist Charlie Haden's Quartet West at Queen Elizabeth Hall this evening, the opening night of the 10-day London Jazz Festival.



10/11/2007 **Mike Hobart, Financial Times**

Simcock's debut recording realises the promise of the young pianist whose schooled fluency won him three major awards in 2005, then aged 24. Now, the youthful dazzle is tempered to a more contemplative personal vision - six of the ten tracks are ballads, and even an upbeat township lilt is muted to a trace element. His acoustic trio vigorously works over the only cover, "The Way You Look Tonight", but generally the ambience is formal, even when Stan Sulzmann and John Parricelli join on sax and guitar.

It was only a matter of time before Gwilym Simcock's debut album arrived, but fewer albums by a UK musician have ever been as eagerly awaited as this. It's a musical photograph of where he was back in the summer, but given his enormous, and still developing, ability and talent he will no doubt have moved on in leaps and bounds from where he was in June. It's one reason why he has been reluctant to commit himself to his debut in his own name for so long – but here it is. Avoiding the debutants urge to shock and awe with an excess of musical bling this is a thoughtfully constructed, well executed album that has the kind of depth and meaning that makes you want to return to it again and again. Opening with a darkly mysterious introduction, 'A Typical Affair' elides into a Latin theme that blossoms into a solo from Simcock that does not make its effect by technical accomplishment, although this is plainly in evidence, but in the freshness of musical ideas that are developed with such striking fluency through his long solo. Simcock uses his guests in a sextet where his writing on 'Sneaky', 'Time and Tide', 'Almost Moment' and 'Affinity' catches the attention with the melodic clarity and harmonic subtleties of his themes. Sulzmann, a greatly underappreciated talent on the UK jazz scene, is featured in a quartet on 'And Then She Was Gone'. On 'A Typical Affair' and the sextet tracks, Ben Bryant and Martin France combine without treading on each other's toes. But **it is Simcock who remains at the front and centre of this album, his easy virtuosity combining with an acute sense of melodic invention that compels attention.**

When Chick Corea calls you a creative genius, you know you're on to something. Praise like this is nothing new to UK piano whiz kid Gwilym Simcock, though. He's won more prizes than he's had hot dinners, but on this long-overdue first album he leaves room for his band to shine too.

Odd time signatures and rhythmic surprises are trademarks of Gwilym's up-tempo pieces on Perception – inspiration he's got from playing with Bill Bruford. Melodic lines fall over each other in "Sneaky" and rhythms criss-cross in "A Typical Affair". Martin France's stunning drumming ignites the fast passages on the album, and the pitter-patter of his percussion complements Gwilym's impassioned playing, while John Parricelli's guitar can be rocky-electric (on "Sneaky"), or warm and classical-sounding (on "Time and Tide").

On Gwilym's slower tunes, like "And Then She Was Gone", he becomes meditative and spacious. From a one-finger intro, thick layers of piano, bass, and drums build up, giving Stan Sulzmann's sax just the canvas it needs to expand and soar. In "Affinity", delicate, dexterous piano lines and chattering drums link in lacy patterns around a Latin feel, held together by melodic sax and Phil Donkin's fine, singing bass.

Gwilym was classically trained before becoming besotted by jazz, and it's obvious in his solo pieces. His touch makes music into raindrops in "Voices", as notes start on their separate journeys, jostle together, and order themselves into a quiet resolution. A live recording of "My One and Only Love" opens like a Beethoven sonata, the beautiful melody floating on effortless ripples of notes. This album's an ideal showcase for Gwilym Simcock. He plays solo, leads a trio and a five-piece, plays his own compositions and throws in a couple of imaginatively interpreted standards. Perception may have been a long time coming, but it's **a gem of a debut.**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/release/c9rg/>



Phenomenal.

11/11/2007 **Stuart Nicholson, Observer**

Flash forward

He's come to save the world. Or at least the jazz bit of it. Stuart Nicholson meets Gwilym Simcock, the British pianist who can turn his hand to almost anything

Gwilym Simcock didn't exactly arrive out of the blue, but it seemed that way. Suddenly the bush telegraph was humming with news about a remarkable young pianist who could rattle off a Rachmaninov piano concerto, play stupendous jazz and read at sight any score that was thrust in front of him. Like a Chinese whisper his reputation has grown and grown - he can leap over tall buildings, rescue small babies from in front of runaway trains and he doesn't even come from the planet Krypton.

The truth is more down to earth. The wunderkind comes from Congleton in Cheshire. Even so, at 26, he's the most talked about young musician in British jazz for decades. In a relatively short space of time, Simcock has become one of those rare players that, if you have not actually heard, then you have probably heard about.

Earlier in the year he wrote and performed his own jazz piano concerto with the ND Radio Big Band in Germany and wrote 'Point of Contact', a suave mix of jazz improvisation and classical music, for the Scottish String Ensemble and toured it with them north of the border. In April he recorded his orchestral suite for big band for the BBC, performed it at the Cheltenham Jazz Festival and in June he was a featured soloist with the London Sinfonietta, conducted by classical composer Mark-Anthony Turnage, whose cross-genre work *About Water* was commissioned to celebrate the re-opening of the Royal Festival Hall.

Last year, Simcock was the first jazz musician to be awarded a place on Radio 3's New Generation Artist scheme, and he is working on a commission for the BBC Concert Orchestra which will premiere next year. This month, he launches his debut album *Perception* at the London Jazz Festival. It features eight haunting originals, the Jerome Kern standard 'The Way You Look Tonight' and a remarkable live recording of 'My One and Only Love' from the Klavier Festival, Ruhr, where he was the featured new artist chosen by American jazz great Chick Corea.

No young musician outside the pop world has moved as fast into the upper reaches of his profession as Simcock. A classical virtuoso who came through Chetham's School of Music in Manchester, Trinity College and the Royal Academy of Music in London, he caused more than a few raised eyebrows when he decided to become a jazz pianist. 'You just do what you want to do,' he says. 'The great thing about being a jazz musician is that you never stay in one place, and how you played a month ago is different to how you play now.' And with that he was off. But why was he heading towards that telephone box?

Gwilym Simcock launches his debut album *Perception* (Basho Records) at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall on Friday 16 November at 7.30pm.



01/10/2007 **Chris Parker, Vortex Website**

a fearsomely intelligent but thoroughly absorbing and enjoyable album, faultlessly performed yet infused with infectious creative enthusiasm a perfect calling card ahead of the pianist's forthcoming November/December UK tour, beginning with a prestigious London Jazz Festival QEH appearance (Friday November 16) opposite Charlie Haden's Quartet West.

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07/09/2007 **Chick Corea** (from the album notes)
Gwilym's an original. A creative genius

07/09/2007 **Mark-Anthony Turnage** (from the album notes)
This album has all the ingredients that signify the start of what has already promised to be a dazzling career.



07/11/2007 **John Kelman, All About Jazz**

It's rare when an artist emerges to accolades like "the most important new pianist on the British scene," and even rarer when such praise is justified. It's rarer still when it's an artist like Gwilym Simcock who, at twenty-six, has won a bevy of British awards despite coming to jazz from a classical background less than a decade ago. For an artist so young, Simcock has racked up a staggering array of accomplishments—a member of drummer Bill Bruford's Earthworks and co-member, along with Earthworks saxophonist Tim Garland, in bassist Malcolm Creese's trio Acoustic Triangle. Simcock is also a significant composer, writing for groups ranging from trios to a forty-piece ensemble featuring a gospel choir and strings.

Too many young artists step out as leaders far too soon. Still, Simcock has paid plenty of dues in a short time span, including Acoustic Triangle's sublime *Resonance* (Audio-B, 2005), drummer Spike Wells' intimate *Reverence* (Audio-B, 2007) and Garland's ambitious *If the Sea Replied* (Sirocco, 2005). With *Perception*, Simcock debuts as a leader, and it's every bit as ambitious and mature as one might expect—and hope.

Revolving around a core trio of bassist Phil Donkin (another youngster at twenty-seven) and drummer Martin France (an exceptionally flexible drummer who's become ubiquitous on the British scene over the past two decades), Simcock's front-and-center on this album of largely original material that also features a few high profile (at least, on the British scene) guest appearances. "A Typical Affair" opens on a demanding Latin-esque note but, with complex shifts in meter that make it a challenge to "find the one," it remains accessible nonetheless. Simcock builds his opening solo carefully, as much a function of rhythm as melody, but with a deep sense of harmony that swings through his tough-to-navigate changes.

Saxophonist Stan Sulzmann, guitarist John Parricelli and percussionist Ben Bryant (heard here on vibes) flesh things out to a sextet for "Sneaky," a buoyant tune that references the knotty yet groove-heavy writing of the late Michael Brecker, and features a robust solo from Donkin as well as a brief but gritty solo from Parricelli. The romantic classicism of "Time and Tide," with Parricelli's nylon-string guitar, Sulzmann's soprano and Bryant's percussion, feels like Oregon at times, but with France's strong backbeat propelling parts of the tune, it's more grounded, less rarified. The rubato "Almost Moment" is darker but no less beautiful, with Sulzmann's tenor and Parricelli's electric swells creating long tones over which Simcock and France layer more fluid expressionism.

Simcock closes the set with two standards—a 10/4, wildly contrapuntal take on "The Way You Look Tonight" and a solo version of "My One and Only Love" that proves Simcock as capable without accompaniment as he is with. It's a fitting closer to **a debut that makes it clear just how far-reaching this young pianist is. While he's already delivering on promises suggested by his emergence earlier this decade, Perception augurs much more to come.**

<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=27464>

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THE SCOTSMAN **FIONA SHEPHERD, The Scotsman**

THE pianist Gwilym Simcock has established a reputation as one of the brightest talents to have emerged on the UK jazz scene in recent times, but resisted the temptation to rush into making his recording debut. His decision to wait has been vindicated in the assurance and maturity evident in the music on offer here. Simcock's flowing pianism and fertile musical imagination are constantly to the fore in a selection of his own impressive compositions, rounded out by interpretations of two standards, The Way You Look Tonight and a version of My One and Only Love (recorded live a couple of weeks after the studio sessions were completed in June). He uses his regular collaborators, bassist Phil Donkin and drummer Martin France, with the great Stan Sulzmann on saxophones on five selections, and guitarist John Parricelli on four of those. Percussionist Ben Bryant also features alongside France on half the album. A highly accomplished debut

The Northern Echo

www.thenorthernecho.co.uk

Newsquest Website of the Year

4/10/2007 Peter Bevan

A long-awaited first recording by this young musician, who's already won several awards. It showcases his piano playing, composing and bandleading skills in trios and with several guests. It's a delight throughout, nicely varied, immediately accessible and with crystal clear playing and recording

Simcock creating a stir

Nov 26 2007 Peter Bacon's Jazz Diary

No doubt at all who the man of the moment is this week. Not only does Gwilym Simcock bring his own bands to the CBSO Centre on Friday, but Tuesday night a new composition of his will sit alongside Rodrigo and Kurt Weill.

So, Friday first. I can't really remember the last time a young British jazz musician made quite such a stir.

One minute the name Gwilym Simcock meant nothing to anyone outside Chetham's School of Music and the Royal Academy, the next he was simultaneously the new pianist in Bill Bruford's Earthworks and in bassist Malcolm Creese's Acoustic Triangle.

And a minute after that he was having a piano concerto written for him by Tim Garland, and his solos, as part of the Kenny Wheeler 75th Birthday Band, were getting appreciative smiles from such critical curmudgeons as Lee Konitz.

Despite this apparent shooting-star behaviour, Simcock is not an overnight sensation - not only did he start very young, he has also left it a while before going into the recording studio as leader.

His debut album, Perception, on Basho Records, is now out and garnering the plaudits from all and sundry. It is this music that we will hear on Friday at the CBSO Centre in this Birmingham Jazz gig - that's if he hasn't written a whole bunch of new stuff in the last couple of weeks.

The evening will mix his trio - Phil Donkin on bass and Martin France on drums - with his quintet - add John Parricelli on guitar and Stan Sulzmann on saxophones - and promises some fine Simcock compositions that have near-orchestral depth as well as providing plenty of harmonic meat for the soloists.

And then there is the playing of the man himself. Simcock brings a whole arsenal of technical firepower, borne of a classical training, to bear on a deep love and understanding of the jazz tradition. Add to that a manifest delight in the exhilarating high that comes from improvisation, and you have the complete jazz musician.

His solo slots in concert - My One And Only Love from Perception is a prime example - show a

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mastery which should take a good five decades of playing to achieve, not a mere two.

If you have heard Simcock before, I am sure you will be there on Friday evening; if you haven't then I would urge you to find out what all the fuss is about.

Imagine you had had the chance of hearing the young Keith Jarrett in an intimate venue for little more than a tenner - you'd still be boring the jazz youngsters of today with that story, wouldn't you?

The Gwilym Simcock Trio and Quintet are at the CBSO Centre on Friday from 8pm, tickets are £12 (£9) from 0121 767 4050 or via www.birminghamjazz.co.uk.

TIMESONLINE John Bungey, 08/12/07

By common consent Simcock is **the hottest young pianist in British jazz**, and the 26-year-old im presses from the off. The Latin lilt of *A Typical Affair* gives way to a torrent of invention, the ideas tumbling from his fingers. Though it's his debut as leader, Simcock gives generous space to other soloists and this is chamber jazz of a very high order.

That said, amid the odd metres and tricky counterpoint, the appeal can seem more for the head than art. A rethink of *The Way You are Tonight* is typically artful, but has little to do with the song's sentiments. It takes a luminous version of *My One and Only Love* to remind just how good he can be

THE BIRMINGHAM POST **Jazz CD of the Week *******

Peter Bacon

The 26-year-old pianist has kept us waiting a while for his first album. It's substantially original material with the trio of Simcock, Phil Donkin on bass and Martin France on drums at its heart. Added on many tracks are Stan Sulzmann on saxophones, John Parricelli on guitar and Ben Bryant on percussion.

The long lyrical lines of *And Then She Was Gone* clearly inspire Sulzmann; the opener, *A Typical Affair*, is a prime example of the Latin-tinged state of controlled euphoria Simcock can achieve with a grand solo; and *Time and Tide* has that lovely mix of formal elegance and jazz elasticity that is a characteristic of the modern British jazz (Julian Arguelles is the model here).

Simcock shrewdly waits till he has presented all his own tunes and convinced us of their strengths, before turning to two solid fold standards: *The Way You Look Tonight* and *My One And Only Love*.

While familiar standards are the surest way to judge, at first hearing, his already impressive talent, it is in the original material, and his development as a composer and bandleader, that the true indications of his potential lie. This is **a fabulous and inspiring beginning**.

JazzUK Dec 07 / Jan 08

Pianist **Gwilym Simcock has established himself as a major presence on the UK scene** in such a short time that it's hard to believe that this is his first album as leader. Even Chick Corea has described him as a 'creative genius'. He rises to the occasion magnificently here, with much assistance from producer Jason Yarde. This is **an enormously satisfying set**, mostly of original compositions, with the basic trio - Simcock, bassist Phil Donkin and drummer Martin France - sounding fresh and oh-so-together. Much credit too, to saxophonist Stan Sulzmann, guitarist John Parricelli and percussionist Ben Bryant, who guest to great effect of several tracks. An impressive debut indeed, but one senses that there's even more to come.

The Jazz Breakfast - Peter Bacon.

The 26-year-old pianist has kept us waiting a while for his first album. While familiar standards are the surest way to judge, at first hearing, his already impressive talent, it is in the original material,

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and his development as a composer and bandleader, that the true indications of his potential lie.

An inspiring beginning



Kenny Mathieson 4/01/2008

Simcock's flowing pianism and fertile musical imagination are constantly to the fore in a selection of his own impressive compositions on this much-anticipated and **highly accomplished debut album**, rounded out by interpretations of two standards, 'The Way You Look Tonight' and a version of 'My One and Only Love' (recorded live a couple of weeks after the studio session in June).

The pianist has established a reputation as one of the brightest talents to have emerged on the UK jazz scene in recent times, but resisted the temptation to rush onto disc. His patience has been vindicated in the assurance and maturity evident in the music. He teams up with regular collaborators Phil Donkin on bass and drummer Martin France, with the great Stan Sulzmann on saxophones on five selections, and guitarist John Parricelli on four of those. Percussionist Ben Bryant also features alongside France on half the album.

GuardianUnlimited

Arts 2007 – Critic's Pick of the Year

British piano-playing wunderkind Gwilym Simcock released a debut album, *Perception*, that testified to his potential as a composer

When young UK pianist Gwilym Simcock played a couple of years ago in a Kenny Wheeler band that included veteran birth of the cool sax legend Lee Konitz, the latter noticeably took a long look over his shoulder whenever Simcock unleashed a solo. The newcomer seemed to have absorbed the jazz piano tradition whole, added ruminative and cross-idiomatic notions from his teacher John Taylor and blasted it with his own style. Simcock's current tour takes in solo piano shows, trio gigs and appearances with Tim Garland's Northern Underground Orchestra, but much of the material comes from his enthralling album *Perception*. He's already an awesome original, but a creative listener too; there are echoes of piano bands including EST and an infusion of South African jazz melody.



Jazz On Three – Chosen as one of the Best CDs of the Year



Simcock's recording debut as leader confirms, yet again, the young pianist's stature. Not only is he a gifted player, but his eight compositions here are impressive and he knows how to configure a group performance to maximum effect. Anchored by the rock-solid yet, paradoxically, fluid bass of Phil Donkin and the remarkable drumming of Martin France, the trio's dialogue is distinguished by its rhythmic flexibility, linear invention and sheer harmonic nous. But even when Simcock adds Stan Sulzmann (tenor/soprano), John Parricelli (guitars) and Ben Bryant (percussion) to the mix on several tracks, what emerges is a homogenous blend of the superior talents involved and clearly the work of a guiding artistic intelligence. And if the trio tracks are superb, Simcock's solo version of *My One and Only Love* shows he can be spellbinding on standards all by himself. www.bashorecords.com **RAY COMISKEY 4 STARS******

CADENCE MAGAZINE U.S.A. July 2008 "Perception" is really in a class by itself. It's the debut from the young British piano wizard Gwilym Simcock and it signals the emergence of a major artist. Despite his tender years, he has produced a surprisingly mature document that would be impressive coming from an artist of any age. Based on the evidence of both the writing and playing heard here, I feel confident that **Simcock already deserves to occupy the inner circle of the great contemporary pianists along with Mehdau, Jarrett, and Rubalcaba**. Like those artists, his idiom falls squarely within Modern Mainstream parameters albeit with strong progressive tendencies.

Simcock is fortunate in his choice of sidemen and Donkin and France seem quite capable of keeping up with the leader—no small feat—as do guest soloists, Sulzmann and Parricelli. Virtuosity is the order of the day here, but it's not the kind of facile virtuosity that I feel sometimes mars the performance of Hiromi (much as I admire her otherwise) but there is a thoughtfulness behind the

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lines that elevate them above mere note-spinning. The writing is quite fresh with "Affair" and "Affinity" being particularly ear catching. Another highlight is Simcock's radical arrangement of "The Way You Look Tonight," an arrangement that almost qualifies as a separate original due to his use of bizarre metric modulation and the twisted harmonies—great stuff! I don't really need to write a long review here—**this is an excellent album and easily the best CD I've reviewed this year.** I recommend that you buy/download this music at your earliest convenience. **David Kane**

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