

**DRUMMER, COMPOSER & BANDLEADER ERNESTO CERVINI DEBUTS
NEW ELECTRIC BAND ON *TETRAHEDRON*,
FEATURING THE EXTRAORDINARY NIR FELDER**

*Lineup: Ernesto Cervini (drums), Nir Felder (guitar), Luis Deniz (alto sax),
Rich Brown (electric bass)*

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Hailed by the *Vancouver Sun* as “one of Canada’s premier drummer-composer-bandleaders,” Toronto-based **Ernesto Cervini** has proven restlessly creative at the helm of the Ernesto Cervini Quartet, his innovative Turboprop sextet, his co-led trios MEM3, Myriad 3 and Tometown, and his Radiohead cover project Idioteque, among other efforts. With ***Tetrahedron***, Cervini flips the script once again, undertaking his first project with an electric bassist (the great **Rich Brown**) and an electric guitarist (the acclaimed **Nir Felder**). Together with them and the marvelous Cuban-born, Toronto-based alto saxophonist **Luis Deniz**, Cervini reveals still new facets of his musical imagination.

Tetrahedron began its existence as a chordless trio with just Cervini, Brown and Deniz. “Rich and Luis were playing together around Toronto and already had a great connection,” Cervini notes, “so I started writing stuff that would work in a chordless electric setting.”

Delving into the rich history of trios with no chordal instrument — as pioneered by Sonny Rollins, Lee Konitz and other legends — Cervini was able to draw upon his own experience with tenor saxophone master Joel Frahm and his chordless trio, as heard on the forthcoming album *The Bright Side*. But even from the start, Cervini entertained the idea of augmenting the trio with guitar, and his mind turned to **Nir Felder**, whose unique jazz language on the Fender Stratocaster seemed like the dream fit. And he knew Felder would be able to transcend traditional “comping,” instead playing a more inventive and abstract role. “Because we’re so used to playing this music as a trio without any comping,” Cervini notes, “we were able to incorporate Nir without having to worry about our traditional ‘jobs’ in the band. And Nir is such a master of that loose, open-ended approach.”

Felder has been hailed as “the next big jazz guitarist” by NPR Music. He and Cervini met and played together during the latter’s stint in New York between 2003-07, and the guitarist’s career took off in the years since: he was handpicked as one of a select few to perform in honor of Pat Metheny’s induction as an NEA Jazz Master at the Kennedy Center in 2018; debuted as a leader on OKeh in 2014 with the well-received *Golden Age*; and landed prestigious gigs with Greg Osby, Rudy Royston, Terri Lyne Carrington, Jeff Coffin and a host of others.

The album leads off with the oft-played standard “**Softly, As In a Morning Sunrise**,” but in a tension-filled arrangement that begins with a minute and a half of solo bass, warm and chordal/contrapuntal in approach. “I loved the idea of not playing the melody until the end,” Cervini says. “Why do we need to play the head twice, necessarily? Unless the music really calls for it. I thought it would be cool to just launch into the solos.”

“The Sneaky Two,” the first of four Cervini originals, follows in something of a complex uptempo Tony Williams vein, with a stop-time drum intro and superbly virtuosic solos from Felder, Deniz and Brown on bass as well. A song from Cervini’s New York years, it was inspired while waiting for the 2 train as it crept slowly into the station. It also refers to the fact that “the rhythmic emphasis in the song is always on beat two,” he explains. **“Wandering”** also evokes a kind of motion, its balladic rubato episodes giving way to something more tempo-based and anthemic. “The idea is that those two lines at the beginning are kind of wandering around trying to find each other, and eventually it all coalesces.”

“Stro” is Cervini’s funky minor-blues nod to Toronto Blue Jays (and New York Mets) pitcher Marcus Stroman, with Brown’s locked-in descending bass loop anchoring heated interchanges from the whole band. And **“Boo Radley”** is Cervini’s rhythmically off-center homage to the subtly pivotal figure from Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*: “That character stuck with me — he’s misunderstood and everyone’s afraid of him because he’s different and yet he turns out to be a normal guy who’s very kind. The message is it’s important to look beneath the surface.”

“Summit Song,” by the unheralded yet influential Chicago altoist Bunky Green, was a pick of Deniz’s, and it brings a certain bluesy bebop waltz flavor to ***Tetrahedron***. And Vince Mendoza’s **“Angelicus,”** set up by Felder with a captivating rubato intro, finds the band getting deep inside the tune’s every gently falling syncopation, with Cervini on brushes guiding the way.

Brown’s **“Forward Motion”** closes out the set in a fast and open swing feel, almost evocative of Metheny and DeJohnette in the guitar/drum duo improvisation up front. The band once again proves its mettle in a charged postbop minor modal setting, with Cervini getting the last word in a dramatic drum solo.

Cervini is a complete, well-rounded musician, having earned degrees from the Royal Conservatory of Music in classical piano and clarinet performance before he decided to focus his energies behind the drum kit. He has a master’s degree from the Manhattan School of Music, a deep network of connections with the highest-echelon musicians, and a performance track record on some of the world’s hippest, most prestigious stages. Returning to Toronto in 2007 after his four years in New York, he has cemented his status as one of the leading champions of the local scene and Canadian musicians more broadly. ***Tetrahedron***, with its potent Canada-meets-U.S. lineup, exemplifies Cervini’s mission and makes for a thrilling next logical step in his journey. From its triangular beginnings as a trio, ***Tetrahedron*** grew to encompass four sides, with four vertices, perfectly formed and in balance.