

Rio-based Pandeiro Jazz Pioneer Scott Feiner Goes the Crowdfunding Way

Written by Ernest Barteldes

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Rio de Janeiro-based Scott Feiner, like many independent artists of late, is reaching out to his fans to help finance the production of his fourth release, *A View From Below*, which is the first to feature solely music penned by the bandleader.

His current crowdfunding campaign, which is going on for another two weeks is hoping to raise enough funds for the printing, distribution and promotion of the disc. He is running the effort through Indiegogo (an alternative to Kickstarter), and supporters can visit <http://igg.me/at/scottfeiner/x/3057017>, and in exchange they can get a digital download (at the \$ 10 level) or a signed copy (at the \$ 25 level).

We caught up with Feiner via an e-mail interview in which we discussed the whole idea of reaching out to fans and also about his current music.

Your first three records were released via different established □ labels like Biscoito Fino and Zoho - why did you choose to use the crowdfunding approach this time around? Do you think this kind of approach allows for more independence?

Well, aside from "Dois Mundos" which I recorded for Biscoito Fino the other two, "Pandeiro Jazz" and "Accents", I financed myself. There are very, very few labels actually paying for recording sessions these days. And really, unless a label is paying for your session, or will be doing a lot regarding publicity and distribution, there's really not much of a point in dealing with the contracts and other red tape. And nowadays the artist can have so much control when it

comes to seeing sales reports, etc..

Many artists and non-profit organizations have relied on crowdfunding of late - even the Coney Island Mermaid Parade was financed that way - do you think this is the way to go for independent artists nowadays?

When I first saw Kickstarter after its launch I flipped out. Crowdfunding seemed like the perfect, democratic solution to our production challenges as creative people. No need for a label to pay for your recording, nor to deal with the bureaucracy of trying to get a grant. The only problem I'm seeing is that people seem to be getting tired of being hit up for money all the time. I personally am feeling uncomfortable with having to constantly remind people about my campaign. I don't know if I would do this again. I guess talk to me when it's finished.

Do you think some artists are abusing the system? I mean, it's not like Zach Braff or James Franco will have a hard time fundraising for their projects - they are major stars!

Yeah, that is a bit weird, but hey ... exactly the guys who probably don't need the help will be the ones to easily get it. I have to pull teeth. But on the other hand, having big name people doing it also legitimizes it more, and removes some of the "embarrassment factor" for the rest of us. I still know musicians who aren't comfortable doing it. They think it's beneath them, or that it will ruin their career status. I can't afford to be so picky. Recently I saw crowdfunding campaigns by Steve Gadd, Dave Weckl, and George Benson. George Benson?! So obviously we're at a new moment.

Let's shift to the music - this is the first time you are doing a record made up solely of original music - is this the "next step" of your Pandeiro Jazz project?

Absolutely. There's only one cover tune that I continue to play regularly in my shows, and that's Big Brother, by Stevie Wonder. The rest are all my tunes. Around the time of recording my first CD the bassist Joe Martin commented to me that I should write more of my own music. That that would create the identity of the project, beyond the fact of the pandeiro-led group. He was totally right. People seem to really like the tunes on this recording.

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The two musicians - Guilherme Monteiro and Rafael Vernet - have been in your band for a while - this is quite a shift from the "American Band" and "Brazilian Band" you used to have in the past. Is there a specific reason you have chosen these two cats or things just fell into place?

Actually Rafael has been playing with me for several years now, but Guilherme did his fist gig with me in December of 2012 in NYC. I thought he fit in immediately. You (Ernest) were at that gig. At the Zinc Bar, with Vitor Gonçalves on keyboards. After the second gig Guilherme did with me I invited him to record the CD, even though he had never played with Rafael.

I knew it would work. In Feb 2013 We played as a trio for the first time at a festival in Ceará, Brazil. No rehearsal. We ran through some of the stuff during soundcheck. They have very contrasting personalities, as players and as people.

A good contrast. I think this trio really has its own sound, and especially with the new material. I don't really think anymore of this "American Band", "Brazilian Band" thing. I play with the best cats who are around me and are into doing it. Luckily I've been fortunate to have top notch players involved wherever I am.

Your new CD "A View From Below"- I believe I heard some unreleased songs at Zinc the last time you were here - do you feel the music has more of an American or Brazilian point of view? You've been in Rio for quite a while now, has your approach to jazz changed much?

Yes, we played some of the tunes from the record. I've been in Rio for 12 years now, but I was born and raised in NYC. I honestly don't think of this American/Brazilian issue that music - whether what I do is more one than the other. I think about the differences between the two cultures all the time, but musically I try to keep my stuff as organic as possible. It might sound cliché, but I'd rather let other people decide what it is. It's definitely a jazz concept without a doubt, but rhythmically I do whatever I feel like.

As someone who lived for many years in Brazil, I was kind of deaf to Brazilian music until I relocated to the US and sort of rediscovered the music thanks to the filter the distance allows. Did the reverse happen to you?

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That's interesting. No, I don't think it has been a case of "rediscovering", but for sure when I walk into some restaurant in Rio and I hear Miles Davis playing on the sound system I feel a certain connection. Hearing that walking bass and the ride cymbal ... just kills me. The Brazilians have samba and we have jazz.

How is your approach to writing songs these days? Do you have a specific regimen or do you let the muse do its work?

I don't have an approach. I can go months, or years, without composing anything. I have a very strange relationship with it. Then all of a sudden one tune will happen and then others follow. Most of the tunes on "A View From Below" were written within a few months period. What's nice is to have people tell you how much they like the songs. That's very rewarding.

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