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Keyboardist/composer Michael Echaniz releases his stunning debut album in the aftermath of his successful cancer battle

***Seven Shades of Violet (Rebiralost)*, due out September 8, 2023 via Ridgeway Records' Rising Stars series, features bassist Jeff Denson and drummer Dillon Vado along with a vibrant host of guests**

"I was captivated by Michael's unique musical vision... His musical universe is rich and deep [and his] compositions are extremely detailed, with a great deal of complexity and depth."

– Jeff Denson, producer and founder, Ridgeway Records

It's often said that an artist pours their whole life into their first album. That may be true, but few young musicians can claim the life experience that pianist/keyboardist/composer **Michael Echaniz** channels into his vibrant debut, ***Seven Shades of Violet (Rebiralost)***. Due out **September 8, 2023** via **Ridgeway Records**, the album is an undeniable passion project that arrives on the heels of Echaniz's successful battle with stage 4 lymphoma. Released as part of Ridgeway's **Rising Stars** series, *Seven Shades of Violet* is a profound first statement from an artist who's had further to rise than most.

"I started having health issues shortly after I got my undergraduate degree at the California Jazz Conservatory," Echaniz recalls. "I dealt with that extreme case of blood cancer for the next two years, going through chemotherapy, immunotherapy and a stem cell transplant. I'm now four years in remission, but it was during that reclusive period when I started doing a lot of composing. Emotionally it gave the project a great depth and seriousness, and gave me the drive to accomplish it."

Seven Shades of Violet features Echaniz on acoustic piano and an array of keyboards including Hammond organ and Fender Rhodes; his core trio for the session includes bassist, vocalist and Ridgeway label founder **Jeff Denson** and drummer/percussionist **Dillon Vado**. The album is graced by three gifted vocalists – **Denson, Danielle Wertz** and **Molly Pease** – and special guests **Dann Zinn** (tenor sax), **Silvestre Martinez** (congas and percussion), **Lu Salcedo** (guitar), **Shay Salhov** (alto sax), **Erik Jekabson** (trumpet), **John Gove** (trombone) and the strings of **Friction Quartet**.

The album's title references Echaniz's fascination with both mathematics and color; more importantly, it hints at the rich and subtly varied hues that he evokes through his stunning compositions. Music, jazz in particular, is always a balance of numbers and emotions, but Echaniz approaches that blend in a dazzlingly synesthetic fashion, drawing rich, vivid expression from complex and shifting structures.

The title track, for instance, is essentially a 12-bar blues in form, a simple fact cloaked in the tune's dark, resonant harmonies. "The piece begins in 7/4, and the harmonies seemed to be a shade darker than the blues – so a purple or violet hue," Echaniz explains. "That more melancholic shade felt like a good fit for the album title."

The subtitle, *Rebiralost*, is Echaniz's name for his malleable ensemble. The invented word is an anagram of *bertsolari*, a performer of improvised song in the Basque culture, where Echaniz traces his heritage. The reconfigured word contains suggestions of loss and rebirth, a life cycle that hit home for the composer in the aftermath of his health issues.

Echaniz met Denson while studying at CJC, where the bassist is Dean of Instruction and Chair of the Bass Department. Denson brought the keyboardist together with Vado for an ensemble class, where the trio ranged through the history of the form. “Each semester had a different focus,” Echaniz describes. “The first semester we explored Bud Powell’s music and the bebop era, the next semester we looked at Chick Corea’s music, and then we went on to more modern players like Tigran Hamasyan and Shai Maestro. Through that we accumulated our own history, and we’ve continued playing together ever since.”

Not only the individual compositions but the album itself is intricately constructed, arranged symmetrically with a brief “Prologue” and “Epilogue” at either end and a pair of mirrored interludes surrounding Echaniz’s arrangement of Wayne Shorter’s “Prince of Darkness.” The album’s sole selection from the jazz canon is the keyboardist’s method of linking his forward-thinking music to the tradition from which it emerges, as well as an homage to the late jazz icon. His unexpected cover of Sky Ferreira’s “Everything Is Embarrassing” is a wink at Echaniz’s own formative years, culling from the indie pop soundtrack of his youth with a powerful vocal turn by Pease.

Echaniz’s original music draws from a panoply of sources. “Proxima Centauri,” which weaves in the mesmerizing twinned vocals of Denson and Wertz, looks heavenward to our own sun’s nearest neighbor, orbited by at least one planet similar to our own – another form of mirroring. “Clockwork” is made up of subdivided rhythms and features Wertz’s recitation of a text by French poet Arthur Rimbaud inspired by the Franco-Prussian war. The battlefield, a deeply-felt analogue with Echaniz’s cancer fight, recurs with “Gernika,” inspired by the April 1937 bombing of the Basque town during the Spanish Civil War and Pablo Picasso’s famously harrowing painting commemorating the tragedy. “Fantaisie 73,” built on a 7:3 polyrhythm, is inspired by Chopin’s 4:3 *Fantaisie-Improptu*.

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Michael Echaniz

Michael Echaniz is one of the brightest musicians, composers, and artists emerging from the West Coast jazz scene. A pianist since the age of five, Michael has studied music at Santa Clara University, California Jazz Conservatory and CalArts. He has played and recorded with such renowned artists as Jeff Denson, Romain Pilon, Wu Man, Gerald Cleaver, Paul McCandless, Scott Amendola, Erik Jekabson’s Electric Squeezebox Orchestra, Dillon Vado, Alan Hall and Friction Quartet. He has been awarded an Honorable Mention in the hyper-competitive 2022 International Songwriting Competition, a New Music Workshop at the 2022 International Jazz Composers’ Symposium (ISJAC) and the prestigious 2021 ASCAP Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composers Award. Michael’s forward-thinking original music embraces rhythmic complexity, haunting melodicism, fluidity between improvisation and through-composition, influence from disparate styles of classical, world, and pop music, and deep emotional connection.

**Michael Echaniz – *Seven Shades of Violet (Rebiralost)*
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