

The Music Outpost – Publicity & Promotion

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Artist: THE ED PALERMO BIG BAND

Album: *THE GREAT UN-AMERICAN SONGBOOK VOL. 3: RUN FOR YOUR LIFE*

Genre: JAZZ, BIG BAND JAZZ, BRIT-POP/BRIT-ROCK

Label: SKY CAT RECORDS Cat. #: SC201001

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THE ED PALERMO BIG BAND
Flaunts the Union Jack with
THE GREAT UN-AMERICAN SONGBOOK VOL. 3: RUN FOR YOUR LIFE
Another Brilliant Blast of Anglophilia that Transforms British Invasion Rock Treasures
into Wildly Inventive Jazz Vehicles



“Palermo’s modern alchemists spin everything they touch into gold... [4 stars]”
[Great Un-American Songbook vol. 1 & 2] – Frank-John Hadley, **DownBeat**

“There’s often a note of humor in the titles and artwork of arranger/saxophonist/composer Ed Palermo’s recordings... But that’s where the funny stuff ends; when Palermo gets down to arranging music, he’s dead serious. ...Twenty-first century big-band music doesn’t get more exciting and impressive than this.”– Jeff Tamarkin, **Jazz Times**

While pundits and experts debate whether the **United States of America** has entered an age of decline as a world power, **New York** saxophonist, composer, arranger, bandleader and inveterate troublemaker **Ed Palermo** makes an incontrovertible case for un-American ascendance. With *The Great Un-American Songbook Volume 3: Run for your Life*, slated for release on guitarist/vocalist **Bruce McDaniel’s** Sky Cat label on November 6, 2020, he turns his attention to the music of the nation’s former colonial overlords. Focusing on material by **Lennon** and **McCartney** (and several acts that followed in **The Beatles’** footsteps), one of jazz’s finest working big bands delivers another batch of reverently irreverent arrangements with enviable precision and improvisational aplomb.

Best known for his celebrated recordings and performances interpreting the ingenious compositions of **Frank Zappa**, Palermo has documented his **Zappaphilia** on numerous **Cuneiform Records** albums such as 2006’s *Take Your Clothes Off When You Dance* and 2009’s *Eddy Loves Frank*. But he’s always cast a wide musical net. On the uproarious 2017 double album *The Great Un-American Songbook Volumes 1 & 2*, Palermo tackled an expansive roster of songs by a wide array of legendary **British** bands, including **The Beatles**, **Rolling Stones**, **Jeff Beck**, **King Crimson**, **Traffic**, and **Jethro Tull**.

Featuring largely the same stellar cast of players, the 16-piece **Ed Palermo Big Band** takes another trip to swinging **London** on *The Great Un-American Songbook Volume 3: Run for Your Life*. In many ways, Palermo is revisiting the music of his youth by transforming it via the craft, artistry and left-field imagination that have made him a singular figure in the world of jazz. “I grew up

with this music, and like the Zappa stuff there's a huge element of nostalgia for me," he says. "But with the skills that I attained through all these years arranging all different types of music I revisit songs that I still love, but interpreting them my way."

On his most recent album, *A Lousy Day In Harlem* (Sky Cat 2019), Palermo unleashed his talent-laden ensemble on a gorgeous array of music by **Ellington**, **Monk**, **Coltrane**, **Egberto Gismonte**, as well as his own finely wrought originals. His love of the jazz idiom is just as apparent on *The Great Un-American Songbook v.3*, which extends into the 21st century the time honored jazz practice of reinventing pop tunes. An arranger with an Ellingtonian palette, he honors and transforms the source material by deconstructing songs and rebuilding them as something wondrous and new.

Palermo's way can best be described as medley virtuosity, as he turns each piece into a Rubik's Cube maze of musical connections. Kicking off with "**Within You Without You**," Palermo nods at **George Harrison's** **Indian** raga fascination with McDaniel's electric sitar drone before crossing the globe and adding a galloping samba groove. An extended quote from the 1966 hit by the **Hollies**, "**Stop Stop Stop**" lays perfectly on the **Brazilian** beat. He creates an even thicker mélange on "**Run for Your Life**," which features a riveting **Ben Kono** tenor solo based on the chord changes of **Cedar Walton's** jazz standard "**Ugetsu**" (aka "**Fantasy in D**"). And don't miss the eight bars lifted from Zappa's "**G Spot Tornado**."

"Once the wheels start churning, that's when I'm in my happy place," Palermo says about his intricate mashup arrangements. "There's just nothing like the discovery, the eureka! moment of realizing that elements of songs can fit together. I love finding a way to put things together when on paper it looks like the songs wouldn't work."

He turns "**Strawberry Fields Forever**" into a thrilling vehicle for violinist **Katie Jacoby**, who navigates a slippery slalom from the beloved Beatles hit into "**Shove It Right In**" ("a typical Zappa love song," Palermo says) from the album *200 Motels*. Listening to her shred, it should come as no surprise to hear that Jacoby also tours with **The Who**. After her solo references "**Darkness**" by **The Police**, the piece careens through fragrant fragments of "**Glad**" by **Traffic**, "**She's Not There**" by **The Zombies**, and Zappa's "**Dog Breath**." On paper, it sounds like a dog's breakfast, but in the hands of these ace players the piece unfolds like it was conceived as a single entity. It's hard to overstate the power and finesse exhibited by the band's longtime rhythm section with pianist **Bob Quaranta**, electric bassist **Paul Adamy**, drummer **Ray Marchica**, and **Ted Kooshian** on keyboards. In the studio the band is documenting arrangements that they've finely honed on the bandstand.

"Before the Covid 19 pandemic we had two regularly gigs, playing **Iridium** every month and **The Falcon** every other month," Palermo notes. "I started arranging these songs with the same fervor as the Zappa tunes, and we've been performing them live for at least a year before the recording. I'm very mindful that I want it to be a work of art in itself. We do the segues and medleys live. Part of the fun is that it all fits like a jigsaw puzzle."

No piece on the album combines more unlikely elements than "**Come Together**," an outrageous mashup that includes a flashing quote from "**Light My Fire**" and a few lines of melody from Zappa's "**Chunga's Revenge**" delivered with admirably dexterity on tuba by **Matt Ingman**. There's another gust of "**G Spot Tornado**" and a scorching solo by Jacoby before the segue into **Thunderclap Newman's** chart-topping "**Something In the Air**" as reimagined by **Scott Joplin**. Quaranta's ragtime interlude turns into a surreal mashup of Zappa's "**Let's Move to Cleveland**" and "**Fixin' A Hole**," with the 6/8 groove of the former somehow meshing with the 4/4 of the Fab Four. The medley concludes with a headlong plunge into the Beatles fellow **British Invaders** with **Jethro Tull's** "**Nothing Is Easy**" a pummeling feature for Jacoby and vocalist McDaniel. The arrangement includes the requisite Zappa quotes, with references to "**Willie the Pimp**" and "**I Am the Slime**."

McDaniel takes over the concluding run, with a gorgeous **Procol Harum** twofer, crooning the nautical "**A Salty Dog**" and the anthem "**Shine On Brightly**." Palermo ends the session with **The Moody Blues** classic "**Nights In White Satin**," a piece that also features McDaniel's stellar vocals and rhythmic traces of the **Allman Brothers** "**Whipping Post**." No album EPBB album would be complete without a recitation by **Mike James**, whose bemused recitation of the Moody Blues' "**Late Lament**" sends listeners out into the night, wondering, what the hell? In other words, it's another Palermo tour de force, a sneak attack revealing the true, enduring greatness of the *Un-American Songbook*.

In many ways, Palermo's career is a case study in getting the last laugh. Born in **Ocean City, New Jersey** on June 14, 1954, he grew up in the cultural orbit of **Philadelphia**, which was about an hour drive away. He started playing clarinet in elementary school, and soon turned to the alto saxophone. He also took up the guitar, and credits his teenage obsession with Zappa to opening his ears to post-bop harmonies and improvisation.

Palermo caught the jazz bug while attending **DePaul University**, and took to the alto sax with renewed diligence inspired by **Phil Woods**, **Cannonball Adderley**, and **Edgar Winter** (the subject of an upcoming Ed Palermo Big Band project). Before graduation he was leading his own band and making a good living as a studio player recording commercial jingles. But like so many jazz musicians, he answered **New York City's** siren call, moving to **Manhattan** in 1977. After a year of playing jam sessions and scuffling Palermo landed a coveted gig with **Tito Puente**, a four-year stint that immersed him in **Afro-Cuban** music.

An encounter with trumpeter **Woody Shaw's** septet at the **Village Vanguard** in the late 1970s stoked his interest in writing and arranging for multiple horns, and by the end of the decade he had launched a nine-piece rehearsal band with five horns. Between **Don Sebesky's** well-regarded book *The Contemporary Arranger* and advice from **Dave Lalama** and **Tim Ouimette**, "I got a lot of my questions answered and I'll love them forever," Palermo says. "Then the real education was trial and error. I lived in a little apartment with no TV or furniture. All I had was a card table, and once a week I'd rehearse my nonet, then listen to the cassette of the rehearsal and make all the changes."

Palermo made his recording debut in 1982, in an impressive session featuring heavyweights such as **David Sanborn**, **Edgar Winter** and **Randy Brecker**. As a consummate studio cat and sideman, he toured and recorded with an array of stars, including **Aretha Franklin**, **Eddie Palmieri**, **Celia Cruz**, **Lena Horne**, **Tony Bennett**, **Mel Tormé**, **Lou Rawls**, **Melba Moore**, **The Spinners**, and many others. As an arranger, he's written charts for **The Tonight Show Band**, **Maurice Hines**, **Eddie Fischer**, and **Melissa Walker**. Employed frequently by bass star **Christian McBride** on a disparate array of projects, Palermo has written arrangements for a **James Brown** concert at the **Hollywood Bowl**, a **Frank Sinatra** tribute featuring **Kurt Elling**, **Seth McFarland**, and **John Pizzarelli**, and a 20-minute medley of **Wayne Shorter** tunes for the **New Jersey Ballet**.

Palermo had been leading his big band for more than a decade before the Zappa concept started coming together. Inspired by electric guitar master **Mike Keneally**, who performed with Zappa on some of his final concerts before the composer's death in 1993, Palermo decided to arrange a program of a dozen Zappa tunes. When the time came for Palermo to debut the material at one of his band's regular gigs at the **Bitter End** in early 1994, a sold-out crowd witnessed the occasion. "The Internet was just becoming powerful, and word really got around," Palermo says. "We were used to playing for small audiences, and the place was packed. There were people who had driven down from Canada, and up from West Virginia who didn't have a clue who I was, but they wanted to hear Zappa's music. It was an amazing night."

The Ed Palermo Big Band earned international attention with its 1997 debut *The Ed Palermo Big Band Plays Frank Zappa* on **Astor Place Records**. With Palermo's brilliant arrangements and soloists such as **Bob Mintzer**, **Chris Potter**, **Dave Samuels**, **Mike Stern**, and **Mike Keneally**, the album made an undisputable case for the Zappa jazz concept. While Palermo has written more than 300 Zappa charts, he's anything but a one-trick pony. Recent releases like 2014's *Oh No! Not Jazz!!* and 2016's *One Child Left Behind*, both released on Cuneiform, featured a bountiful selection of his original compositions and material by composers not named **Frank Zappa**.

Nothing demonstrates the ensemble's ongoing vitality better than the stellar cast of players, with longtime collaborators such as violinist **Katie Jacoby**, baritone saxophonist **Barbara Cifelli**, drummer Ray Marchica, and keyboardist **Ted Kooshian**. Many of these top-shelf musicians have been in the band for more than a decade, and they bring wide-ranging experience, expert musicianship and emotional intensity to Palermo's music. From the first note of *The Great Un-American Songbook Vol. 3: Run For Your Life*, the Ed Palermo Big Band manifests greatness in a truly Un-American musical cause.

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*"All in all, it's [vols I & II] a thrilling rollercoaster ride through the last 50-odd years of prominent musical Brits filtered through a decidedly modern big band lens.*

*...It's a brilliant bit of musical reimagining that has long been the hallmark of progressive jazz figures (John Coltrane's "My Favorite Things," anyone?) and proves well-suited to Palermo's strengths as an arranger."*

– John Paul, Popmatters

*"[Ed Palermo]...one of the greatest musicians and arrangers in the world."*

– Christian McBride

*"He [Ed Palermo] has a breathtaking approach to re-contextualizing everything in a fantasia that swoops from Frank's (Zappa) work to Todd Rundgren to Wayne Shorter to whatever - just traveling through the history of music. I was absolutely flabbergasted."*

– Mike Keneally

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For more information on The Ed Palermo Big Band

www.palermobigband.com/music – www.facebook.com/palermobigband www.twitter.com/palermobigband

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

Please credit photographer: **Hugh Brennan**. Digital [High-Resolution] images available on request.



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**THE GREAT UN-AMERICAN SONGBOOK VOL. 3: RUN FOR YOUR LIFE**  
*track listing*

1. **Within You Without You (Part 1)** (The Beatles) / **Stop Stop Stop** (The Hollies) 5:26
2. **Run for Your Life** (The Beatles) 2:50
3. **Strawberry Fields Forever** (The Beatles) / **Shove It Right In** (Frank Zappa) 5:14
4. **Glad** (Traffic) 4:20
5. **And Your Bird Can Sing** (The Beatles) 0:48
6. **Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite!** (The Beatles) 4:04
7. **Within You Without You (Part 2)** (The Beatles) 1:09
8. **Come Together** (The Beatles) / **Chunga's Revenge** (Frank Zappa) 3:55
9. **Something in the Air** (Thunderclap Newman) 0:55
10. **Let's Move to Cleveland** (Frank Zappa) / **Fixing a Hole** (The Beatles) 5:38
11. **Nothing is Easy** (Jethro Tull) 4:57
12. **A Salty Dog** (Procol Harum) 4:14
13. **Shine on Brightly** (Procol Harum) 4:02
14. **Nights in White Satin** (The Moody Blues) / **Moggio** (Frank Zappa) 7:34

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LORD EDWARD'S "ROYAL BOLLOCKS BRIGADE"
aka The Ed Palermo Big Band

Appearing on The Great Un-American Songbook Volume 3: Run For Your Life

ED PALERMO - arranger / conductor

PAUL ADAMY - electric bass

JOHN BAILEY - trumpet

MIKE BOSCHEN - trombone

RONNIE BUTTACAVOLI - lead trumpet

PHIL CHESTER - alto sax, soprano sax, flute, piccolo

BARBARA CIFELLI - baritone sax, bass clarinet,
and Eb mutant clarinet

CHARLEY GORDON - lead trombone

MATT INGMAN - bass trombone, tuba

KATIE JACOBY - violin

BEN KONO - tenor sax, flute

TED KOOSHIAN - electric keyboards

CLIFF LYONS - alto sax, clarinet

RAY MARCHICA - drums

BRUCE MCDANIEL - guitar, electric sitar, vocals

BOB QUARANTA - piano

BILL STRAUB - tenor sax, clarinet

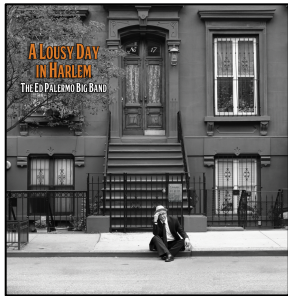
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About the **COVER ART**  
by **Brennan ArtHouse** for  
***The Great Un-American Songbook Vol. 3: Run for Your Life***

Illustrations: **Matthew Brennan** | CD art & design: **Hugh Brennan**

For *The Great Un-American Songbook, Vol. III: Run for Your Life*, the **Ed Palermo Big Band** looks again across the big pond, focusing attention on the great songbook of British rock and pop, and especially **The Beatles**. In typical Ed Palermo fashion, the album art is humorous, engaging, lovingly irreverent, and fun. Illustrated by **Matthew Brennan** – son of photographer **Hugh Brennan**, who did the cover of Palermo's most recent album release, *A Lousy Day in Harlem* (2019: **Sky Cat**) – the artwork depicts the Ed Palermo Big Band's attempt to record a **Beatles'** tribute album in London – an effort that derails due to palace intrigue over royalties, with bandleader Palermo run over by a double-decker bus commandeered by his own band members - an off-script reference to another Beatles tune, "**Run for Your Life**". The rear cover features four band members in Beatles garb dancing in mutinous abandon over their bandleader/ conductor/ arranger, who is flattened like **Wile E. Coyote** in the middle of London's iconic **Abby Road** crosswalk. Featuring illustrations of each of the big band's 16 members, packed with allusions to Beatles tunes and lore, and salted with isolated nods to **Procol Harum**, **Frank Zappa** (via a poodle), and band-member side-projects, the album art work (front and back covers and booklet) is as multi-layered and entertaining as the music within *The Great Un-American Songbook Vol. 3: Run for Your Life* all brilliantly arranged by Ed Palermo.

## WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT:

THE ED PALERMO BIG BAND    *A LOUSY DAY IN HARLEM*    SKY CAT RECORDS    2019



"There's often a note of humor in the titles and artwork of arranger/saxophonist/composer Ed Palermo's recordings...and this one is no exception: The cover of *A Lousy Day in Harlem* plays off of the classic 1958 Art Kane photograph of 57 jazz musicians gathered in front of a Harlem brownstone, with Palermo in front of the same building, alone and forlorn.

**But that's where the funny stuff ends; when Palermo gets down to arranging music, he's dead serious.** ... the numbers are either Palermo originals or interpretations of pieces both contemporary (Renee Rosnes) and classic (Ellington). **Throughout, there's a uniformity in the airtight arrangements and the seamlessly executed playing. Twenty-first century big-band music doesn't get more exciting and impressive than this.**

... **Ain't nothing lousy at all about this one."**

- Jeff Tamarkin, *JazzTimes*, June 21, 2019

"...his new disc, *A Lousy Day in Harlem*... features tunes by Ellington, Monk and Trane in addition to ...originals.

**Palermo leads one of the best big bands in contemporary music** so you would think that jazz – authentic jazz, jazzers' jazz, shall we say – would be his stock-in-trade. But no: more typical of his recorded output is last year's *The Adventures of Zodd Zundgren*, a mash-up of the catalogues of Frank Zappa...and Todd Rundgren. **Both albums are great examples of the arranger's art, united if not by their compositional sources then by their penchant for humour."**

- Robert Shore, *Jazzwise*, Jan. 2020

**"Here is Palermo's answer to the FZ line about jazz not being dead...: a beautiful, sweeping album of gracious originals and repertory pieces. His love of melody, and often very simple melody, was reflected in his affection for the British invasion bands and there is a lot of delightful songsmithery here, from the delightful opening tribute to trumpeter and jazz den-mother Laurie Frink to the gorgeous closer This Won't Take Long.**

**You can often judge the quality of a composer/arranger by the material (s)he picks. Who else would have thought of doing Duke's Brasilliance (with Caravan interpolated) like this?** Of back-to-back big band versions of Well, You Needn't and Giant Steps, as if saying Yes, it really can be done? And what a coup to pick out Renee Rosnes' and Walt Weiskopf's Gargoyles, a strange, floating idea over a pedal point with no fixed tonality that once appeared on Billy "Mr Rosnes" Drummond's The Gift. A great tune, superbly reimagined.

**There isn't a track here I don't love. *A Lousy Day* is now officially my favourite Ed Palermo album, which makes it one of my favourite albums of recent years. Period.** You might disagree, but my advice is: forget about Zappa and listen to this one without preconception. Big band jazz dead? It smells pretty good to me. 4/5 stars"

- Brian Morton, *Jazz Journal*, 29 October 2019

"Even the CD cover is funny, a beautiful wink at the famous 1958 photos with all the Jazzcats, A Great Day in Harlem. For Ed Palermo...the big band leader is sitting...alone and not necessarily in a good mood. The composer and arranger shows a similar amount of humor on his new album. **For decades, Palermo has been a very busy big band leader with great sound and project ideas.** I first noticed him with his great Frank Zappa arrangements. The current CD features an interesting mix of originals and jazz classics by, for example, Monk and Ellington. **His band acts like a giant single cell, moves like a single organism. The sound of the wind instruments is captivating, the rhythm section is very tight, the soloists are excellent.** ... **Another great CD from a big band mastermind who never seems to run out of ideas. 4/5 stars.**

- Angela Ballhorn, *Jazzthetic*, Nov.-Dec, 2019 [Google translation]

**"Each hour spent with this prime example of Ed Palermo's complex and engaging answer to the question "what should big band music sound like in 2019?" is time well spent.**

... The band has become well-known for...interpretations of Frank Zappa's music. ...Todd Rundgren and...British progressive rock bands.... **Despite these rock leanings, the Ed Palermo Big Band is a jazz ensemble, and *A Lousy Day in Harlem* is fully immersed in jazz.** The album is evenly divided between Palermo originals and expertly-arranged covers. ...Happily, **Palermo's compositions stand strong alongside the Monk and Ellington and Coltrane.** ...

As for musicianship, several members of the Ed Palermo Big Band could be cited for their intricate and beautiful solos...**but having amazing musical chops is clearly a prerequisite to being in a band that can effortlessly hop from Monk to Zappa to the "My Three Sons" theme song. To single out any particular soloist almost seems unfair, but it is fair to say that brilliance abounds."**

- Rich Wilhelm, *PopMatters*, 15 Jul 2019

"...the focus here is on some classics from Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane, and Egberto Gismone, as well as a healthy dose of Palermo originals. **It's a thrilling set of big band jazz...**

... **Kicking off with "Laurie Frink", a sizzling Palermo original, and you immediately get swept away with some addicting melodies, a wealth of groove, and a plethora of solos... Coltrane's "Giant Steps" is just magnificent, Straub & Kono delivering some incredible, melodic solos that would have made the master proud.** ...

**From start to finish, *A Lousy Day in Harlem* is anything but 'lousy', the album full of thrilling performances, stellar covers, and wonderful originals. Ed Palermo and his band have done it again people, do not miss this one!!**

Score: [5 out of 5 stars]

- **Pete Pardo, *Sea of Tranquility*, June 29th 2019**

"The 13 tracks which course through *A Lousy Day in Harlem* intersperse Palermo's six originals with compositions associated with Duke Ellington...and others. Palermo explains"... **It felt like the right time to show the world another side of the band."**

The album opens with Palermo's 8:23 "Laurie Frink,"...upbeat and swinging...a showcase for the band's tight presentation and...soloing. ... Equally fun is..."The Cowboy Song,"...nod to a cowboy movie soundtrack (think Dimitri Tiomkin's *Red River*, *High Noon* or *The Big Sky*).

**Among the cover tunes, there are several gems.** Ellington's nearly-forgotten "Brasilliance" is ... a fast-cruising wonder with memorable solos

...and...an unanticipated diversion into a bit of "Caravan"...a lot...goes on during the three minutes of an off-beat rendition of Monk's "Well You Needn't"...references to "In Walked Bud," "Straight No Chaser" and rhythmic hints of "Evidence." Even more notable is "Giant Steps,"

which...cites...dueling banjos' scene in *Deliverance*. ... **Palermo has a self-effacing, unconventional sense of wit, which never gets in the way of Palermo's task, which is to array his big band within jazz's history, tradition and fidelity. That equilibrium makes *A Lousy Day in Harlem***

one of the best large ensemble jazz projects issued this year.”

- Doug Simpson, *Audiophile Audition*, Jul 19, 2019

“*A Lousy Day in Harlem* showcases the expertise of Ed Palermo as both an arranger and composer through the release of his latest masterpiece with the Ed Palermo Big Band. The title of the album is an amusing take on the famous photograph taken in 1958 by Art Kane.

... The comedic nature of the album cover speaks true of the music too ... My highlight of the album is Nicki Denner's tap-dancing solo in the middle of 'The One with the Balloon', a special touch. Not to be missed, is the album's finale track appropriately named, 'This Won't Take Long' featuring Palermo himself on alto.

‘A Lousy Day in Harlem’ is a quality addition to the big band repertoire and is a great example of keeping the big band alive in the 21st century. The fresh balance of combining traditional styles of jazz with contemporary injections makes this album a must-listen for any big band enthusiast.”

- Thomas Fletcher, *Jazz in Europe*, 7/17/2019

“A Lousy Day in Harlem is the new CD from The Ed Palermo Big Band... The sleeve notes contain some jokes, a useful list of which band members solo on which track, and then a more serious dedication...

This mixture of wit, humour, compassion and attention to detail within the sleeve notes gives a hint of Palermo's musical approach too. His compositions are dense, crammed with invention, but also allow plenty of space for individuals to shine. The excellent band breeze through the demanding scores and produce a beautiful rich sound. The arrangements are lush and stuffed full of detail, good humoured and action-packed – in fact, I had to keep stopping the record between tracks for a breather.

The choice of harmonies, the changing time signatures and the juxtaposition of certain instruments means that a few of the pieces are infused with a Frank Zappa-like sensibility. ...

There is an authentic Latin American feel to many of the pieces too...

There are...splendid covers. ...

Palermo's own compositions stand up well in this illustrious company. He loves a good melody, and there are plenty of delicious tunes. ...

*Affinity*, a lovely swinging waltz ... Another is a gorgeous number called *The One With The Balloon*, which is like an instrumental version of a lost song from a Disney film. It features a wonderful trombone part for Charley Gordon, a reference to *Pop Goes The Weasel* and a tap dance solo.

There are many delights in listening to The Ed Palermo Big Band – the expert musicianship, the lovely tunes, the energy, but also the joy of hearing unexpected snatches of other tunes which Palermo can't resist slipping in. As he says: “Nothing is sacred and everything is sacred. It's all done with love.”

-Jane Mann, *London Jazz News*, 8/5/2019

“The Ed Palermo Big Band – the celebrated big band of over 30 years and best known for their “reinventions” of the music of Frank Zappa – released *A Lousy Day in Harlem* on April 12 via Sky Cat. Here, bandleader/arranger/composer/saxophonist Ed Palermo unleashes his talent-laden ensemble on a program of his original compositions and arrangements of works by jazz greats. One of these is Thelonious Monk, tributed in a new take on his standard “Well, You Needn't.” While this track opens with the title composition, it could be described as a Monk medley, including references to other works by the iconoclastic pianist, from “In Walked Bud” to “Straight, No Chaser” to “Evidence.”

- by Matt Micucci, *Jazziz*, July 1, 2019

“To paraphrase a rhetorical question once posed by Frank Zappa: Does humor belong in jazz? For arranger, composer, saxophonist and bandleader Ed Palermo, the answer to that query has long been “Yes! Yes! A thousand times yes!”

... Matt Ingman—a bass trombonist in Palermo's band—came up with the cover concept for the ensemble's new album, *A Lousy Day In Harlem* (Sky Cat). It depicts Palermo sitting alone and despondent in front of... where Art Kane assembled 57 jazz musicians... for his famous photo *A Great Day in Harlem*. (Hugh Brennan shot Palermo's update exactly 60 years later.)

On *A Lousy Day*, Palermo nods to both jazz history and his own. Half the album consists of delightful new arrangements of swinging tunes he composed between 1979 and '81....

Much of the program on *A Lousy Day* consists of standards and standouts from the band's 500-tune book....

Most of Palermo's humor, however, lies in the music's richly textured citations and juxtapositions. The scores themselves are funny...

“I'm in my mid-60s now,” he continued. “What do I have left—a few years, if I'm lucky? My thinking is, I'm going to have as much fun as possible... Bandleaders like Maria Schneider and Darcy James Argue are the ones carrying the music forward, and I really give it up to them. Me, I'm just writing good music and having a good time. I want my tombstone to read, ‘It was fun while it lasted.’”

-- Richard Gehr, “Ed Palermo Enjoys a ‘Lousy Day’ with New Album,” *DownBeat*, Apr. 7, 2019

“To fully return to the jazz tradition, Ed Palermo... had himself photographed on the same sidewalk as the famous photo of Art Kane... In reality, Ed Palermo has never moved away from jazz, since his debut in 1982 in the company of David Sanborn... and later, with... projects alongside Christian McBride... However, since 1994,... affection for some youth idols led him to devote himself... to translating music from different sources into jazz language, first of all the repertoire of the beloved Frank Zappa, ... then his other... rock and pop heroes... With the new work “A Lousy Day in Harlem” (Sky cat records), the culture of jazz, honored with covers by Ellington, Monk, Coltrane reinterpreted with absolute philological respect ... is the absolute protagonist, even if not exclusive.

It starts with “Laurie Frink,” a piece with a cinematic appeal in which the orchestra is able to demonstrate all its exuberance and elasticity in a dynamic contrapuntal game... The work ends with a song that already in the title says, ironically, everything: “This Won't Take Long”. And in fact in just over two minutes there is the whole soul of the Ed Palermo Orchestra: fast pace, horn section at full throttle, solos in profusion.

Dark day, but only as a joke: with these cats, fun is inevitable.”[Google translate]

- Andrea Baroni, *Tracce di Jazz*, April 17, 2019

“The Ed Palermo Big Band, *A Lousy Day In Harlem* (Sky Cat Records) A CD as worthy as its title (and cover photo) is humorous. My primary experience with saxophonist, bandleader, and arranger Palermo's big band has been in the mode of transformation, specifically the work of Zappa, Todd Rundgren, and most recently, a slew of British rockers, into his big band context. That was cool stuff, but I can't deny being more moved by this plunge into jazz (which is where Palermo got his start in the early '80s); it includes original material (opening with the superb “Laurie Frink”) and readings of songs by Ellington, Gigi Gryce, Monk and Coltrane. Along the way Palermo's band does nothing to radically alter the trad big band thrust, but the arrangements are consistently engaging, and the playing is very sharp. A-“

-Joseph Neff, *The Vinyl District*, May 2, 2019

**“Ed Palermo is real good for jazz. Why? Because this saxophonist, composer and arranger moves his big band to consider any source an engaging good time for receiving ears and eyes.**

Ed visited Morning Jazz with the entire group to chat about their latest album, *A Lousy Day In Harlem* (Sky Cat Records).

The first number they performed was a mash-up of Frank Zappa, Charles Mingus and Duke Ellington, with a Frederick Lowe finish on "Get Me To The Church On Time." Take some time to hear what I'm talkin' about.

- Gary Walker, [“Ed Palermo Big Band on Morning Jazz, 8/6/19,”](#) WBG0

**“Satire and jazz usually don’t go together, but bandleader Ed Palermo has made it a specialty...** This time, he makes fun of the iconic 1958 photo, with his 15 member ensemble delivering grooving boppers on a take of Thelonious Monk’s “Well You Needn’t” to having tenor saxists Bill Straub and Ben Kono go from schmaltz to sizzle on a read of John Coltrane’s “Giant Steps.” The horn sections punch like Sonny Liston as John Bailey blisters his horn on “Like Lee Morgan” and the leader himself bounces on the alto for a toe tapping take of Gigi Gryce’s “Minority”. ...Most intriguing is when Palermo pulls out a rare tune, the obscure Ellington piece “Brasilliance” and has the sections flex their muscles over the caravan cavalcade of rhythm. **This is a must have for big band fans.”**

- George W. Harris, [Jazz Weekly](#), October 10, 2019

“Mr Palermo’s cover... that of the bandleader alone, hand on forehead, bemoaning...great loss... Of course...on the inside of the inlay-card. There is...the reminder “Don’t be a jerk-off – vote!” ...The artist is often the invisible guerilla in society – certainly anyone who pays heed to Mr Zappa as Mr Palermo continues to do – a great disrupter a poet whose weapon is a metaphorical two-way mirror...held up to society...

**Of course, everywhere the music oozes stylish urbanity. Musicians play brilliantly throughout, echoing the architectural nature of charts, dense with changes in mood, structure and tempo. The considerable degree of balance and integration of melody, harmony and rhythm, of composition and improvisation, of exploration, individuality and tradition is impressively maintained throughout this constantly interesting programme.”**

- Raoul Da Gama, [JazzDaGama](#), Nov. 3, 2019

**“It doesn’t take more than one spin to recognize that the original compositions presented here are every bit as good as the covers of Monk, Coltrane, Ellington, and others, in fact the thirteen piece set is surprisingly cohesive beginning to end. The opener, “Laurie Frink,” is a Palermo original... An original closes the album as well. “This Won’t Take Long” is a playful and expressive piece full of joy and adventure. In between there are many noteworthy pieces, both originals and covers, starting with the absolute standout “Sanfona,” written by Egberto Gismonti, a stunningly melodic piece that will live on in your head all day... In summary, *A Lousy Day in Harlem* is a magnificent day for jazz, and a powerful statement by this sixteen piece unit and Palermo as a composer.”**

- Peter Thelen, [Expose](#), 5-13-2019

**“This is golden age big band jazz, as he drives his 18-piece band through works by the likes of Ellington, Monk, Coltrane and Egberto Gismonte as well as some of his own compositions.** My dad used to listen to music like this; it...first got me interested in the scene as a youngster, and it is hard to express just how much joy I have had from playing this. If I was to take just one song...it would have to be Ellington’s “Brasilliance”, as the musicians have literally been unleashed to weave and counter-weave the melodies, creating strands which in their own right are complex and innovative but come together to create something strong and formidable. ... drummer Ray Marchica...is channelling Gene Krupa with incredible energy and passion.

**Palermo has delivered an album of incredible arrangements, allowing the soloists to have their voice, and always driving the band on to incredible heights. Any fan of the classic age will just love this, as Palermo has gone back in time to allow people like me to remember what caused us to fall in love with the genre in the first place. So he has approached some modern popular music greats, has shown he can tackle “straight” jazz with aplomb, what on earth is he going to do next? Rating: 10/10”**

- Kev Rowland, [House of Prog](#), 9/13/2019

**“... *A Lousy Day In Harlem*...turns the spotlight on Palermo's compositions plus delightful interpretations of pieces by Duke Ellington, Egberto Gismonti, Gigi Gryce, John Coltrane, Thelonious Monk, and the duo of Renee Rosnes and Walt Weiskopf. The 15-piece ensemble is in fine form throughout and there are a number of powerful solos including several by Mr. Palermo.**

**Regarding the Palermo originals, they are all impressive. “Like Lee Morgan” celebrates the fine trumpeter from the 50s and 60s...Tap dancer Nicki Denner joins the EPBB for a spirited dance on “The One With The Balloon”, an evocative melody that also makes room for a solo from trombonist Gordon and a touch of accordion from Kooshian. ... “*A Lousy Day In Harlem*” is Ed Palermo's satirical title take on the famous 1958 Art Kane photograph... But the music from the Ed Palermo Big Band is no laughing matter unless you're laughing at such delightful and audacious music. Put the disc on play, turn the volume up loud, and watch the party start!**

-Richard Kamins, [StepTempest](#), July 19, 2019

**“Ed Palermo is a cult figure in some listeners' circles, in others completely unknown. ...Now Ed Palermo Big Band has recorded ravishing ... strictly jazz material, which in the case of this group may be quite a surprise.**

Palermo decided that the time was right to finally show the jazz side of the band... Apart from compositions by Ellington, Monk, Coltrane, Egberto Gismonti, among others, the album features original works by Palermo. ...**the whole sounds very coherent and - one might say - stylish.**

We listen to a great, rich-sounding big-band in mainstream compositions, and yet the arranger winks at the listener every now and then, showing that under the guise of this “jazz classic” there is a lot of humor and freshness. I think **you can treat this album as a kind of a modern tribute to classical jazz playing. The band does it masterfully - both during the extensive big-band parties and in the great performances of solo musicians. The album is full of great melodies, juicy sounds and technical virtuosity. In a class of its own.”**

-Piotr Rytowski, [Jazz Press](#), Sept. 10, 2019 [Google translation]

**“Last year, sixty years after the famous photo shoot of Art Kane A Great Day in Harlem – featuring around sixty jazz giants posed beautifully at 17 126th Street in Harlem, New York - saxophonist and bandleader Ed Palermo wanted to pay homage by going to be filmed in exactly the same spot, same day and same time. The photo, by Hugh Brennan, is now the cover of his most recent album, on Sky Cat Records: A Lousy Day in Harlem. Dice Palermo: “The thing about this record is, I wanted it to be jazzier. We play a lot of jazz in my band, but I've been doing Zappa and British Invasion stuff for years and I've had these other types of music in my book, jazz tunes that had been close to my heart for decades. I finally felt ready to record these tunes - tunes I'd composed, and tunes I'd arranged. It felt like the right time to show the world another side of the band.”**

- Sergio Amadori, [Hibou, Anemone & Bear](#), Aug. 12, 2019

## WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT:

THE ED PALERMO BIG BAND    **THE GREAT UN-AMERICAN SONGBOOK: VOLS.1&2**    CUNEIFORM RECORDS    2017



“...this ace bandleader-arranger is dead serious about his song-renovations, striving for exceptional music that contains levels of technical resourcefulness and emotional exposition associated with premium jazz. Palermo bloody well nails it. Of all the Beatles songs recorded by big bands over the years, his treatments of “Eleanor Rigby,” “I Wanna Be Your Man” and three more Liverpoolian favorites are found near the front of the pack.

Soloist Katie Jacoby’s electric violin hits sweet spots... Bruce Daniel and Ringo Starr’s cousin Mick Starkey are impressive singers...

**Palermo’s modern alchemists spin everything they touch into gold... [4 stars]”**

- Frank-John Hadley, *DownBeat*, June 2017

“...Ed Palermo...is of the generation of jazz players that proudly acknowledges the impact of non-jazz inspirations. As if to drive that point home—and perhaps vex...the “jazz police” with their pronounced

devotion to The Great American Songbook—his latest opus pays tribute to popular songs (mostly) from the ‘60s-70s British rock canon. Songs by King Crimson, The Nice, Jethro Tull, Cream, Traffic and, of course, those Beatles get the big band treatment in a manner evoking the great post-Swing Era jazz orchestras of Count Basie, Woody Herman, Thad Jones/Mel Lewis and Gil Evans— majestic, intricately and briskly arranged and swinging mightily. ...If you like your jazz serious or hate rock music, this is not for you. If you enjoy classic rock and big band jazz served up with a sense of fun, make a splash here (and wait up for the bonus track).”

- Mark Keresman, *The New York City Jazz Record*, May 2017

“...*The Great Un-American Songbook: Volumes I & II* has close to two hours of prime UK material (think Cream, the Beatles, King Crimson, Jethro Tull and more)... Palermo... crafts swinging large ensemble jazz interpretations of both well-known and obscure tracks...which breathe new life into these older songs.

... The results are phenomenal. ...there is undeniable depth as well as requisite wit which permeates Palermo’s double-album package. These are not throwaway arrangements, and there is plenty of musical virtuosity. ...Palermo...proves jazz is alive and well, and can sound funny and serious at the same time.”

-Doug Simpson, *Audiophile Audition*, June 13, 2017, [www.audaud.com](http://www.audaud.com)

“...it’s a thrilling rollercoaster ride through the last 50-odd years of prominent musical Brits filtered through a decidedly modern big band lens. ... This type of playful approach to otherwise well-known material helps lend even the most familiar songs here an exciting air of newness, with the original’s melody popping up now and then to make itself known amidst the myriad instrumentalists...

While there are tongue-in-cheek elements littered throughout...the music never once...goes for the low-hanging fruit. ...It’s a brilliant bit of musical reimagining that has long been the hallmark of progressive jazz figures (John Coltrane’s “My Favorite Things,” anyone?) and proves well-suited to Palermo’s strengths as an arranger. ...a brilliant amalgamation of both the well-known...and the somewhat obscure...

...*The Great Un-American Songbook: Volumes I & II* is a wickedly enjoyable listen from top to bottom. [Rating: 8/10]”

-John Paul, *Popmatters*, July 25, 2017, [www.popmatters.com](http://www.popmatters.com)

“...*The Great Un-American Songbook, Volume 1 & 2*, is an ambitious 2-CD set of 21 pop songs arranged for his big band. The musical results are lively, passionate and just outside enough to engage the most experienced listener.

...The album features familiar songs from The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and Cream, but the real surprises are selections made famous by prog-rock enthusiasts King Crimson, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, and Jethro Tull. ...Palermo has honed his craft as an arranger who knows how to write for his group of talented players. ...most everything succeeds on this big record...

— John Corcelli, *Critic at Large*, April 5, 2017, [www.criticsatlarge.ca](http://www.criticsatlarge.ca)

**“RINGER OF THE WEEK ... The 17 piece jazz orchestra plus two vocalists takes rock songs of the 60s and 70s through the puree’ of modern jazz sensibilities, and it works to astonishing success. ...**

Two, count ‘em, two pieces from King Crimson, INCLUDING a riveting “21<sup>st</sup> Century Schizoid Man,” and a hip flute on a read of Jethro Tull’s “Beggar’s Farm.” A couple pieces by Jeff Beck...while Cream’s “As You Said” and Emerson, Lake and Palmer’s “Bitches Crystal” mix swing with rich harmonies. ... **This 2 disc set is BOSS!”**

- George W. Harris, *Jazz Weekly*, June 1, 2017, [www.jazzweekly.com](http://www.jazzweekly.com)

“...an interesting and effervescent big band album with saxophonist and composer Ed Palermo's talented jazz orchestra...for both jazz and rock fans. ...This may be an exercise in nostalgia, but the arrangements and the high quality of the ensemble playing and soloists keep the music fresh and interesting.” -Tim Niland, *Music and More*, April 12, 2017, [jazzandblues.blogspot.com](http://jazzandblues.blogspot.com)

“...Anyone should be entertained by guitarist Bruce McDaniel’s uncanny vocal impersonations and in-character, comic, interstitial commentary, the powerhouse energy of the 18-piece EPBB, and the gripping soloists, most notably electric violinist Katie Jacoby. File with Sun Ra, Sex Mob, and Microscopic Septet in “fun jazz.” [Rating: Music 4.5/5 Sonics 4/5]“

- Derk Richardson, *The Absolute Sound*, Sep 26, 2017

“...the results are pretty amazing. ... *The Great Un-American Songbook Volumes 1&2* is a generous 21 tracks of big band schizophrenia, and I mean that in the best possible way. Ed takes rock songs – both sophisticated and unsophisticated – and transforms them into high-end big-band compositions infused with energy and humor, and always infused with top-flight musicianship. ... There’s a strong core rock band in the center of the mix on songs ...but it always manages to come back to jazz, sometimes hot, sometimes cool and swinging. ...”

-Bert Saraco, *The Phantom Tollbooth*, March 26, 2017, [www.tollbooth.org](http://www.tollbooth.org)

“In this era of Great Again, the very American big band of Ed Palermo offers us a British Invasion in its own way. Beatles' interpretations , of course, with... I Wanna Be Your Man (with Mick Starkey , Ringo's cousin!), Stones ( We Love You ), Jeff Beck ( Definitely Maybe ) or King Crimson (one of the best versions of Lark's Tongues In Aspic 2 ). ...loaded with Zappian quotations. ... [Rating: 4/5 stars]”

- Rejean Beaucage, *VOIR*, March 23, 2017, [www.voir.ca](http://www.voir.ca)