

# JAZZ



## Raul Midón: Alone Together

*ZM* Black



ortofon  
accuracy in sound

Like many performers, I was hit with the realization back in 2020 that my full slate of live gigs was effectively erased for the foreseeable future due to the pandemic. Pangs of fear rippled in the pit of my stomach. How would I make a living? How long would this involuntary hiatus last?



The temporary loss of gigs presented itself to me as an opportunity to make a recording of original instrumental compositions with improvised solos, played in the duo format with a variety of guitarists. This would put my love of improvised music front and center, and enable me to re-connect with a bunch of amazing players, some I hadn't spoken with in 20 years. And it gave my compositions focus.

As a singer-songwriter, my job is to tell a story through words with music as accompaniment. When I play live, as a songwriter, the solo is icing on the proverbial cake. It is not the main thing. With this recording, *Eclectic Adventurist (ReKondite)*, I get to express my love and appreciation of music as pure art with a language unto itself.

My vision for the new recording was to choose players, who through their commitment and diligence, had developed a unique artistic voice. With each one of these individuals, one can hear a special approach to the guitar that sets them apart. My process involved listening to hours and hours of each person's playing, absorbing their particular artistic voice, then constructing a composition that I hoped would allow them to be themselves. This was a new way of working for me, and it produced some amazing results. Collaboration is an act of mutual trust which almost always brings forth the unexpected.

Now we come to the music itself and the tricky subject of genre. I've never bought into the idea of strict rules when it comes to genre. I believe Duke Ellington expressed the idea that there are two kinds of music: good and bad. Though we may have different ideas about what is good or bad, we all know what we like. What I like, when it comes to a piece of music, is to hear a strong sense of commitment from the creator of that music. Blues, rock, jazz, folk, flamenco, bluegrass, country, hip-hop, even punk — it makes no real difference to me, as long as I hear what I choose to call commitment in the music that makes me feel a connection to its creator.

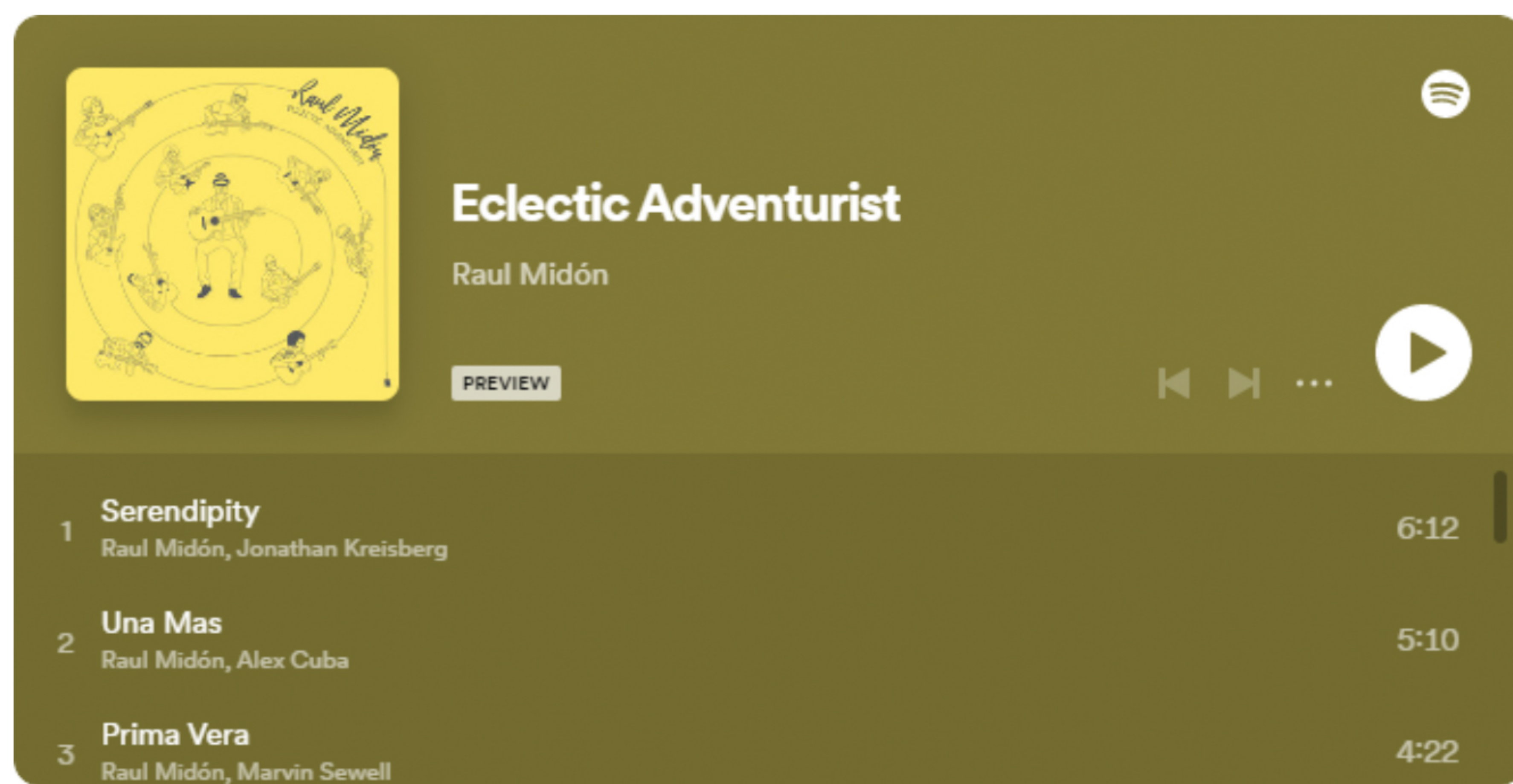


Each track on the record tells a different story. Though the tracks are vastly different, they are connected by the sound of the guitar and the emphasis on improvisation. I am proud of the diverse influences represented. On "Serendipity," we wander into Wayne Shorter/Joe Henderson territory with a composition that employs the specialized language of linear modal harmony with a solo from Jonathan Kreisberg that is simply breathtaking. I went to school with Jonathan at the University of Miami, and he has since become one of the greats. I remember hearing him play in New York a few years ago and thinking, "Holy crap! This is what I have to contend with — this level of playing. I'm glad I sing."

Then there's "Una Mas," featuring Alex Cuba, which uses clavé and a rhythm reminiscent of guaguancó to drive it forward. "Primavera," on the other hand, has Marvin Sewell playing blues slide guitar on a resonator over an Argentine folk rhythm. We can hear some Gypsy jazz on a duet with Stephane Wrembel, and there is a twisted modal blues with Mike Stern, one of the greatest fusion players of all time, which is replete with suss chords. When Mike received the track, he called me up and said "Raul, this is really hard." I just laughed, because I had to tell him that it took me a couple weeks to learn how to improvise over my own freaking tune!

In short, this is a record that will stretch your brain if you want that, or it can be the background for a gathering of friends. I invite you to listen. — **Raul Midón**

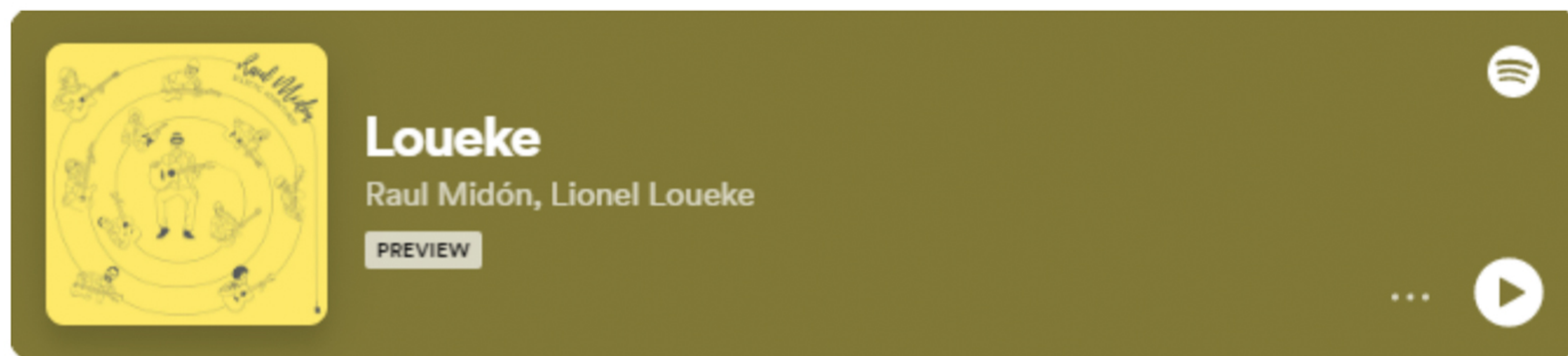
*The duos project **Eclectic Adventurist** is singer-songwriter-guitarist Raul Midón's first album comprising all instrumental original compositions.*





**JAZZIZ On Disc...** The pandemic lockdown presented both challenges and opportunities for jazz artists. While wracked with worry over his ability to perform live and tour, guitarist and vocalist **Raul Midón** also took advantage of his time at home to write material and conceive of a new project. Why not connect, virtually if not physically, with fellow guitarists on a set of duets, each of which he'd write with his guest participant in mind? The results comprise Midón's latest release, *Eclectic Adventurist(ReKondite)*, which also represents his first album of all-original instrumental music.

Midón called on old friends, such as Jonathan Kreisberg, with whom he attended the University of Miami, as well as fusion great Mike Stern, Gypsy jazz master Stephane Wrembel and Grammy-winning Latin jazz artist Alex Cuba, among others. The distinctive sound of Beninese guitarist and vocalist **Lionel Loueke** inspired Midón's composition "Loueke," our selection, the pair engaging in a gently funky and soulful duet. Midón's sparkling acoustic picking shimmers against Loueke's burbling electric groove and wordless vocalizing. The players then switch roles, with Midón's rich rhythmic chords supplying a scaffold for Loueke's lyrical leads, a reverberant grace note adding a surprise shirt tail to the performance. - **Bob Weinberg**



[\*Click here to listen to and read about more of our JAZZIZ on Disc tracks.\*](#)



### About JAZZIZ

JAZZIZ is the award-winning, authoritative voice of jazz culture. Read about, listen and watch the music and artists featured in the magazine's colorful pages.

**BACK ISSUES, VINYL  
ALBUMS & MORE**  
BROWSE THE JAZZIZ SHOP  
SHOP NOW



### Contact JAZZIZ

JAZZIZ Publishing  
PO Box 880189  
Boca Raton, FL 33488  
United States