

## Mp3 The Fantastic Merlins - Live



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Intensely cinematic and entirely unique, the rare beauty of The Fantastic Merlins begins with the group's unusual blend of cello, saxophone, bass, and drums. 5 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Free Jazz, CLASSICAL: Contemporary Details: The Fantastic Merlins are: Jacqueline Ferrier-Ultan, cello; Brian Roessler, bass; Federico Ughi, drums; Nathan Hanson, tenor saxophone. Intensely cinematic and entirely unique, the rare beauty of New York and Minneapolis based instrumental combo The Fantastic Merlins begins with the group's unusual blend of cello, bass, saxophone, and drums. Replete with stunning dynamics and melodies that range from playful to mournful, the resulting style encompasses avantgarde jazz and chamber music alike, as well as everything in between: classical-yet contemporary experimentalism, complex rhythms, and breathtaking improvisation. For Rome-to-NYC transplant Federico Ughi (drums), even the ideas he commits to memory or shares in rehearsal are ultimately "a ramp to this improvisation," and Jersey City saxophonist Nathan Hanson insists the structural flexibility suits the group just fine: "Some pieces are very similar from one performance to the next; some are never the same twice." While this kind of genre-bending anti-pop typically caters to the jazz or classical crowd, St. Paul's Brian Roessler (bass) has noticed The Fantastic Merlins are already attracting a widely diverse audience. "A lot of people out there seem to be hungry for the kind of thing we're doing. Our goal is to connect with these people." The Fantastic Merlins formed in early 2005 as the result of a couple of informal playing sessions: The previous summer, Roessler recruited longtime friend and collaborator Hanson and Minneapolis cellist Jacqueline Ferrier-Ultan to play a few gigs as a trio. Agreeing they were on to something special, Hanson called on Ughi to complete the group, and everyone rendezvoused in Minneapolis to play some shows and track a record. Since the foursome came together on the strength of artistic reputation and shared interest with little regard for the breakdown of instrumentation, the sound that emerged was a discovery in

its own right. "People have commented on the auspicious interaction between cello and saxophone, or between cello and bass," says Ferrier- Ultan. "Their timbres blend so beautifully you can't always tell which instrument is playing what." According to Roessler, this kind of seamless acoustic integration is precisely what The Fantastic Merlins are after. "We all seem to have a unified vision of what kind of textures and feelings we want to create, without ever having to talk about it." In the end, the music says more than enough.

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