

## Mp3 Katahdin's Edge - Step Away



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"These guys are badder than the Bad Plus" - Ed Harvilla (fan) This new take on a traditional jazz trio blends jazz-rock-middle eastern sounds together. 8 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Traditional Jazz Combo, JAZZ: Acid Jazz Details: Katahdin's Edge brings tension and drama to jazz landscape Willie Myette, John Funkhouser, and Mike Connors have the kind of pedigree that would lend itself to astonishing and unexpected results. Their debut together as Katahdin's Edge is exactly what you'd expect from three adventurous performers, and nothing like you've heard before. Step Away, the band's inaugural CD brings profound drama and depth to what is normally a very predictable jazz format: the trio. Myette, the group's voice on piano, proved he had a flair for melody and arranging on ...this is jazz, his bow as a bandleader. Funkhouser, whose name couldn't be more appropriate for a bass player, also leads his own band and has toured throughout the U.S., Asia, and France. Drummer Mike Connors has studied with the likes of Joe Hunt and Alan Dawson, as well as with neo-lounge experimentalists Combustible Edison. Both Myette and Funkhouser have extended educations in jazz, with Myette attending the Berklee College of Music and Funkouser the New England Conservatory. Myette launched the successful JazzKids program, a fully developed instructional jazz piano program for children. Funkhouser also headed the Jazz Studies Department at Manhattanville College. He currently teaches at Berklee. The band clearly knows its music, and on Step Away it really shows. It doesn't take long for the drama to kick. The title cut, begins with an almost acid-jazz rhythm track running under everything like white water, while Myette swims atop it with his fleet and beautiful piano hooks. The piece demands the listener's attention, and keeps it for the entire disc, though cinematic tunes like "Engima" and the Guaraldi-esque "Zargonic Effect." Throughout the album, the performances such as these often extend beyond the commonplace and into the sublime. Myette is a clean, athletic, occasionally dark pianist who learned his craft in part

from pianist/icon Fred Hersch. Connors is a muscular drummer who knows how to push the boundaries of tradition and when to abide by them. Funkhouser is, like his name, funky and nimble fingered on bass, with plenty of room to roam in these exciting arrangements without losing his support of the trio's often breathless tempos. It wouldn't be a stretch to call Katahdin's Edge's Step Away a work that is, well, a "step away" from something truly remarkable, even brilliant. As it stands, it is no less than a bold, virtuosic artistic statement and an exhilarating ride through some of the year's most dramatic jazz.

----- Berklee College of Music graduate, and pianist, Willie Myette leads Katahdin's Edge. This is Myette's second album as leader. His first CD, entitled "...this is jazz" received excellent reviews and airplay throughout the country. While perfecting his musical craft, he has launched JazzKids ([jazzkids.com](http://jazzkids.com)), a fully developed instructional jazz piano program that has brought jazz performers as young as 6 years old to the stage and surprised and delighted crowds of unsuspecting listeners. Myette has toured both the U.S. and abroad as performer and clinician. Bassist, John Funkhouser, received a graduate degree in Performance and Composition from The New England Conservatory of Music. Also the leader of his own band called FunkHouse, he has toured the U.S., Asia, and France. He was the past head of Jazz Studies at Manhattanville College in Purchase, NY and Concordia College in Bronxville, NY. He taught at The Brimmer and May School in Newton, MA and currently teaches at Berklee College of Music in Boston, MA. Drummer, Mike Connors has studied drumming at Berklee College of Music with jazz greats Joe Hunt and Alan Dawson. Connors has toured the U.S. and Europe with the avant-garde pop group Combustible Edison whom he has also recorded several times with. He has performed music both for film and television and can be heard on the film Four Rooms and commercials for Microsoft. ----- Step Away spices up the piano trio format with shifting time signatures, quirky melodies, some solid rock beats, bits of funk grooves, and brooding interludes juxtaposed with bright rhythms. And you'll hear the occasional Balkan tinge in there, too, along with some subtle "mysterious" and "unearthly sounds," by a pianist who favors the darker tones a good deal of the time, even when the bass and drums have a bounce in their step. Pianist Willie Myette wrote all the songs here, creating a sound that feels very spontaneous. A student of Fred Hersch, his approach is similar to his teacher's style-thoughtful, sometimes foreboding ("Full Circle"), with a good deal of mixed meter grooves laid down. There is also here a sense of adventure. While Step Away could be called mainstream, the melodies are never predictable-you don't come away from the

experience whistling them, and band energies and moods tend to ebb and flow within a single tune. A consistently interesting set of sounds, the song "Wagons of the Night," inspired by Myette's visit to the catacombs in Paris, is a particular highlight, a somber mood on piano in front of the rise and fall of the bass/drum tempo. "Zoeie" opens jauntily, a bouncing bass/drum unit behind the sharply percussive piano melody built around a repeated phrase, with a subtle wind-like sound (studio tweakings) blowing cool in the background. The group makes spare use of studio textures, leaving the mood feeling mainstream; but they use those "mysterious sounds" so well that more of them would have been welcome here. Step Away proves itself a successful and attention-grabbing debut for Katahdin's Edge. Visit Katahdin's Edge online at [katahdinsedge.com](http://katahdinsedge.com). Dan McClenaghan

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