

## Mp3 Jake Smolowe - Level With Me



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Jazz for the mellow and playful listener: A solo piano exploration, combining free-flowing improvisational tracks with tightly arranged, dynamic original compositions. 9 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Smooth Jazz, JAZZ: Jazz Fusion Details: \*\*\*Visit [jakesmolowe.com/biography.html](http://jakesmolowe.com/biography.html) to learn more about Jake Smolowe and his musical endeavors.\*\*\* Level With Me marks my first foray into solo acoustic piano recording, as well as a first test of my skills as an audio engineer. I recorded the entire album at home on my family's Ibach piano, using a single Rode Stereo NT4 microphone, a DigiDesign DIGI002 audio interface, and ProTools LE running on a Powerbook G4. For post-production, I sent the album to a professional mastering engineer, preferring to learn mastering techniques for a later project. While some of the compositions on Level With Me come from my old performance repertoire, the album in many ways represents new ground for me. Rarely have I recorded my improvisations in the past, though they continue to drive my advancement as a composer and as a collaborative musician; this album includes four improvisational tracks. Moreover, in earlier stages of my compositional development, I most often wrote music that carried little or no meaning beyond its artistic value; on this album, each song conveys a unique emotional and personal context. "lost visions" reflects a recurring scenario for me, sometimes in dreams, in which I imagine in an instant that I see someone I've loved and lost, and then the next time I look the person has vanished. The anguish that I feel during such moments manifests itself in the plethora of dissonances scattered throughout the improvisation, and in the abrupt, untimely ending. "Wish You Were Here..." most specifically applies to my first romantic relationship, on which prolonged separation steadily took its toll. On a different, more general level, it applies to a sense of longing I feel periodically for those friends and relatives of mine who have passed away over the years. "They Won't Know What Hit 'Em" and "The Next Step" share almost identical back stories. They concern parallel stages in my growth as a

musician, and also my desire to spread my love of jazz to everyone I know. I composed and performed the two pieces at the midpoints of my high school and college careers, respectively, as the first jazz entries ever accepted into traditionally classical performance art showcases. "verging" represents my life when it starts to feel chaotic and out of control. I begin to feel that I'm standing at the edge of something dangerous, and I have to rely on my friends, my family and my music to prevent me from slipping. "stars and mirrors" sets to music a vision I dream up occasionally while lying in bed at home. I have a large painting above the head of my bed, and a ceiling the color of the night sky, with glow-in-the-dark stars spread about to complete the effect. At night, the glass encasing the painting reflects the stars on the ceiling but nothing else, and the painting itself blends into the shadows. I like to imagine that a real sky exists behind the glass, and if I could somehow step through I'd enter a fantastical world reminiscent of the many novels I enjoy reading. "Level With Me" represents more of a personality trait than any specific story or emotion. I have a rebellious streak, and this song epitomizes my rebelliousness against-and my profound respect for-the blues. Many musicians treat the blues as a vehicle for hard-swinging, feel-good improvisation, but I wanted to try my hands (sorry) at two-part counterpoint, with an emphasis on pulling and pushing at the beat. I wrote "Waltz With Padded Feet" following a two-week period over which I suddenly lost two of my favorite pets, my beautiful white American Eskimo dog Lily and my sleek, jet-black cat Jonny. "Waltz" sat unfinished for months while I struggled to write a bridge for a cyclical, halting A-section. Eventually summer arrived and we choose to add a new member to our family, a wonderful tuxedo-clad kitten we affectionately named Pastorius (after Jaco). After three months with the little guy, a playful bridge popped into my head that balanced out the poignant A-section. Pets often act similar to people, but they certainly dance to a different beat sometimes; hence "Waltz" doesn't always quite meet the criteria for a waltz. "positive future" embodies my determination to live with pride and hopefulness even in the most difficult times. I believe strongly in the importance of maintaining my will, and in turning to others for help when necessary. Sometimes during a crisis we retain only the smallest glimmer of hope, but even a tiny sliver of optimism can prove enough to sustain us if we hold on tightly enough. These pieces cover loss, love, artistic legitimacy and recognition, fantasy, innovation, rebellion, emotional health, elation, and steadfast optimism; they represent individual moments in my life as well as ongoing struggles and endeavors. When considered as a collection, I hope that they just might connect to tell a cohesive story. Jake Smolowe November 18, 2004

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