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## An Italian and a flautist walk into a studio . . .

By Sam Pfeifle|

*The Acadia Session* has a good story going for itself. Jazz vocalist Giuppi Paone, in Portland from Italy to visit friends, meets up with flautist Carl Dimow and it's musical love at first listen. So Dimow rounds up some of his pals — he's recorded with everyone from the Casco Bay Tumblers to Okbari to Dulce de Leche to his own Kolosko Dimow Duo — and arranges for a session at Acadia.

Paone, Dimow, trumpeter Mark Tipton, bassist John Clark, and drummer Hayes Porterfield show up and start going at it. Jazz happens. Paone takes the recordings back to Italy, mixes and masters, and here we have it, hot off the presses from Zone di Musica.

Good stories don't always make good music, but this time around it's hard to deny they captured an intimate moment of improvisational wizardry and musical freedom. As even the most low-budget of local albums now feature production technology that would have been state-of-the-art just 20 years ago, it's rare to hear an album of musicians just fucking around and seeing what happens.

It's freeing as a listener to hear the curiosity of each individual player as he or she discovers what's around the corner of each song.

They certainly let Clark do his own thing on the beginning of the seven-minute "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," and you've never heard it open more starkly. It's not haunting so much as arresting. By the time Paone enters, Johnny's march has been replaced by a staggering, lurching, desperate locomotion that she shatters with a delicate laugh, a sprightly delivery that takes all of the song's built-up emotion and lets it wash up on shore. Porterfield quickens things with a high hat and Clark moves into a more rapid on-beat three-note repetition that lifts Dimow into a spiraling arch in the upper reaches of his instrument.

Finally, Paone gets caught up and riffs on the song's title, as though she can't reconcile the words with the sounds in her mouth, and she needs to rattle them around and turn them over to see what they're made of.

It's been a while since you've heard an old standard deconstructed just like this. And that's the accessible stuff. Halfway through "La Porta Sull'oceano," Clark's bowed bass and Paone are wading in the murky lower register, a grunting almost, Paone like in many places in the session just emitting random syllables, working with rounded opens and clipped finishes. She's all sibilance in "Strada

Bianca,” like a mouse skittering across the floor. “Maine Rush Hour” has an early section like listening in on a schizophrenic talking to herself in tongues. Porterfield’s bit of solo just after the two-minute mark there is a particularly artful use of each piece of his kit, but the song can be unnerving, nonetheless, especially when she goes into the laughing as music. It’s part of an early-album warm-up tune, too, and while you know logically what she’s doing, it’s hard not to ascribe a certain kind of mania to it.

There’s a middle ground, though. The way Tipton and Dimow trade riffs over Porterfield’s brush on the snare in “Late-Late Nite Ferry Blues” is like watching two people have a conversation on the other side of the room, making out what they’re saying just by watching the expression on their faces. Paone’s scat is more classic bop jazz, and to hear Tipton ape it is cool as hell. The ears on this band are wide open.

Best of all, they plan on doing it again this weekend in front of people at Mayo Street Arts, to celebrate the release of this album and to see, yet again, what happens. Pianist Phil James will fill in for Tipton, which will make it all the easier not to have a plan, and to let the songs play themselves.

This is adventurous, fun collaboration that makes for a living, breathing recording, and ought to be a roller-coaster in person.