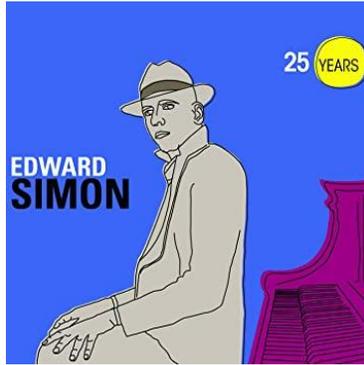


EDWARD SIMON
25 YEARS
Ridgeway Records
– RRCD016



DISC 1:

1. Ericka* [6:53]
2. Alma Ilanera* (Part 2) [6:02]
3. Govinda [5:12]
4. Fiestas [5:24]
5. Simplicity [5:12]
6. Pathless Path [15:37]
7. Pere [6:48]
8. Impossible Question [9:12]

DISC 2:

1. What If? [7:17]
2. Aguantando* [9:07]
3. Caballo viejo* [7:09]
4. Barinas [9:14]
5. Uninvited Thoughts [7:55]
6. Navigator [5:42]
7. Gracias a la vida* [7:33]
8. Venezuela unida [9:30]
9. Triumphs [5:46]

*All compositions by Edward Simon except
Ericka (Marlon Simon),
Alma Ilanera (Pedro Elías Gutiérrez),
Aguantando (David Binney),
Caballo viejo (Simón Díaz), and
Gracias a la vida (Violeta Parra).

Producer: Edward Simon
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Celebrating a half-century of life and a quarter century of trailblazing music, Venezuelan-born turned San Francisco Bay Area-based pianist, composer, educator and bandleader **Edward Simon** releases a two-disc career retrospective, **25 Years**, on **Ridgeway Records**.

Brimming with arrestingly beautiful music drawn from 13 albums spanning 1995-2018, *25 Years* features a brilliant cadre of Simon's closest collaborators including tenor saxophonist Mark Turner, altoist David Binney, bassists Scott Colley, John Patitucci and Ben Street and drummers Brian Blade and Adam Cruz. This compilation is a personally curated tour through some of his highlights as a recording artist, and reflects Simon's recently forged role as associate artistic director of the Bay Area nonprofit Ridgeway Arts, an arts organization, label and presenter founded and run by Jeff Denson – bassist, composer and California Jazz Conservatory's dean of instruction.

Simon didn't set out to compile a comprehensive portrait of his career. There are no examples of his formative sideman work with Bobby Watson, Terrence Blanchard or Greg Osby, and some of the music he recorded as a leader couldn't be included. But *25 Years* vividly captures a restlessly creative artist wrestling with his influences, honing his voice, and finding an utterly personal synthesis of Pan-American styles. The first disc focuses more on what award-winning jazz journalist Ted Panken describes in his incisive liner notes as Simon's "early-career masterworks of jazz polylingualism." He hears his younger self and his freewheeling bandmates as eager to plunge into uncharted territory, unburdened by self-imposed expectations. Says Simon, "We were really exploring ideas of bringing together the traditions that I love. I grew up playing Latin American music, the genres under that large umbrella. They're traditions I continue to explore and love, particularly the rhythms but also the song forms that come with them. Those early albums capture that exploration, which is wrapped up with the classical music element that I really love and went to school for, the desire and aspiration for structural clarity in composition and arrangement and the playing itself."

The music ranges far and wide. He introduces the collection with "**Ericka**," a winsome piece from his widely influential 1998 album *La Bikina*. His pianism is luminous, his touch strong and refined. His lines and the feel of the piece call to mind Keith Jarrett, a beacon for jazz players deeply engaged with classical music. Written by his older brother, percussionist Marlon Simon, he makes a clear statement that *25 Years* isn't only about him. With tenor saxophonist Mark Turner, altoist David Binney, bassist Ben Street and drummer Adam Cruz, he's joined by a cadre of era-defining improvisers still some of his closest collaborators. "**Pere**," an elaborate melody from 2001's *Afinidad* that writhes over a 5/4 groove, features a quartet with Binney, bassist Scott Colley and the extraordinary drum tandem of Brian Blade and Cruz on percussion and steel drum. The extended exploration of "**Pathless Path**" from 2013's *Trio Live In New York at Jazz Standard* captures his celebrated combo with Blade and bass maestro John Patitucci giving a master class in creating form out of freedom while relentlessly building tension over more than a dozen simmering minutes. It's music that could only flow from players bonded at the deepest level. "It's an extended family that has played such an essential role in this music," Simon says.

The second disc concentrates on his work as an arranger and orchestrator. "**Uninvited Thoughts**" from his critically hailed 2018 album *Sorrows and Triumphs* investigates expanded instrumentation, and features the *Afinidad* quartet (Binney, Blade and Colley) plus percussionist Luis Quintero and the Imani Winds. His long tenure in an all-star band is represented by "**Venezuela Unida**" from *Live at SFJAZZ Center 2017: Original Compositions & the Music of Ornette Coleman, Stevie Wonder and Thelonious Monk*. An impassioned cri de coeur over the ongoing humanitarian disaster that has beset Venezuela for more than a decade, it's a verdant tapestry of shifting meters and tempos.

While Simon has spent far more of his life in the United States than his homeland, Venezuela still provides the life-sustaining marrow of his music. Born in Punta Cardón, his father instilled a love of music in his sons, percussionist Marlon Simon, trumpeter Michael Simon and Edward. The brothers performed for dancing at local fiestas and events, tapping into an array of rhythms from Venezuela and beyond – they last reunited for a performance together in 2010 as Simon, Simon & Simon. At 15 Simon left Venezuela to enroll at the Philadelphia Performing Arts School, a now-defunct private academy. Studying classical, he discovered jazz, and eventually connected with Philly masters bassist Charles Fambrough and guitarist Kevin Eubanks. Landing in Manhattan at 19, he quickly established himself as an essential new voice. Five years with great altoist Bobby Watson and nine with trumpeter Terrence Blanchard (who, like Simon, had thrived in the hard-bop academy of Art Blakey's *Jazz Messengers*) established Simon as one of his generation's leading accompanists. Looking to combine his growing authority as a straight ahead jazz player with his love of Latin American idioms, ambitions put him at the center of a brilliant wave of fellow South American artists recently arrived in New York. That creative journey unfolds in exquisite detail on *25 Years*, an anthology that documents the arc of a culture-bridging artist who's still ascending.

"One of the strongest pianists of his generation, with intuitive empathy and drum-like ingenuity, and solos compositionally with passionate elegance." — Ted Panken, *DownBeat*

www.edwardsimon.com
Edward Simon – 25 Years (YouTube video)



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