

I first discovered Christian Euman as a recurring name on bills with my favorite Los Angeles musicians and was drawn to his intimate, considerate, deeply expressive style. In the liner notes of this album, Euman's debut as a leader, Jacob Mann emphasizes the "childlike sense of joy" with which Euman approaches music and life, but notes that "it's important to make the distinction between childlike and childish", asserting that this joy is accompanied by a certain maturity and seriousness. Mann's words perfectly capture the aesthetic of this album and much of the other work of the "collective" featured here.

Christian Euman, bassist Alex Boneham, trombonist Ido Meshulam, saxophonist Daniel Rotem, and vocalist Michael Mayo were all part of the Thelonious Monk Institute class of 2015, so there is a chemistry in this group that is somewhat rare in modern jazz. A movement seems to have sprung up around recent Monk/Hancock Institute graduates, with many a familiar face appearing on albums, videos, and other performances led by Euman's bandmates. The works of this collective feature the same "childlike" curiosity that Mann describes informed by a certain wisdom and patience- a combination of peace and passion that fascinates and inspires me.

Euman's drumming on this and other projects epitomizes this spirit. There is no sense here that Euman has "something to prove" but rather that he has "something to say" and the skill to say it quite eloquently. The first track, *And When I Die*, opens with Rotem on soprano and sultry rhythm section accompaniment by Euman, Boneham, and pianist Miro Sprague. Communication is ever present throughout the album. The understated nature of Euman's drumming opens up possibilities for development and expression by the soloists. The transitions between ECM-style, rock, and straight-ahead jazz accompaniment never seem forced.

Michael Mayo's beautifully unfaithful interpretation of *And When I Die* emphasizes Laura Nyro's classic lyric while shedding the song's usual folk aesthetic. Mayo also delivers standout performances on subsequent tracks "Distraction" and "Maid of Honor", essentially acting as a horn player by joining in on the melody and taking stellar improvised solos. "Maid of Honor", perhaps my favorite track for its quirky, winding melody and straight-ahead sensibilities, also features a jaw-dropping example of communication, tandem development, and devotion to melody between Daniel Rotem and Miro Sprague- two players I have always admired for their selflessness.

More Than Ever features lyrics and vocals by Erin Bentlage- another gem of the emerging creative music scene in Los Angeles. This track really epitomizes the beauty that I see in this collective of musicians. There are no hangups here when it comes to genre, chasing trends, or adherence to some elusive concept of “the tradition”- just sincere, poetic music. Miro Sprague’s melodic Rhodes perfectly complements Bentlage’s haunting voice and the interspersed vocal improvisation adds to the song’s organic, expressive quality. Please do not sleep on artists like Erin Bentlage and Michael Mayo, who are setting a new standard for vocalists of all genres.

Speaking of artists to pay attention to, I was delighted to see that this album features Ido Meshulam, a local trombone phenom. Meshulam brings the fiery intensity that this album needs from his long, energetic bass trumpet lines on “And When I Die” to his brash outbursts on *Happy Yellows*- a playful number reminiscent of Mingus’ tone poems. Euman once again demonstrates his commitment to creating something meaningful alongside the soloists, sometimes reacting to their energy and sometimes pushing them into new territory. Rotem provides a bluesy, rhythmic solo accompanied by Meshulam’s wild trombone interjections.

“10,000” features standard, delightful post-bop quartet fare with energetic improvisations by Rotem, Sprague, and Euman. “Don’t Go to Your Face” returns to the subtlety of earlier tracks. Mayo and Bentlage join the horns to form an unusual choir on the backgrounds and sendoff into solos. Meshulam closes out the album with a soulful, building bass trumpet solo. Likely named for Allemong Drive in Euman’s home state of Illinois, *Allemong* is a celebration of the drummer’s incredible creative talent and driving curiosity as well as window into the future of creative music in Los Angeles. This group of musicians genuinely excites me, so look out for their names in future reviews.

Listen to *Allemong* today on any streaming platform and please consider support these incredible artists by purchasing the album on [Bandcamp](#).

Track Listing:

1. *And When I Die* (Nyro, Arr. Euman)
2. *Distraction* (Euman)
3. *Maid of Honor* (Euman)
4. *More Than Ever* (Euman, lyrics by Bentlage)

5. *Happy Yellows* (Euman)
6. *10,000* (Euman)
7. *Don't Go to Your Face* (Euman)

Personnel

- [Erin Bentlage](#) (vocals, lyrics)
- [Alex Boneham](#) (bass)
- [Christian Euman](#) (drums, vocals, leader, composer)
- [Michael Mayo](#) (vocals)
- [Ido Meshulam](#) (bass trumpet, trombone)
- [Daniel Rotem](#) (soprano, tenor saxophone)
- [Miro Sprague](#) (piano, Fender Rhodes)

Album Information

- Title: *Allemong*
- Year Released: 2020
- Liner Notes by Jacob Mann