

**WITH OPEN-HEARTED MELODIC INSTINCTS, ACOUSTIC BASS GUITARIST  
YOSEF-GUTMAN LEVITT LEADS AN INSPIRED TRIO ON *UPSIDE DOWN MOUNTAIN***

*PROFOUND LYRICISM AND MULTIFACETED INTERPLAY WITH PIANIST OMRI MOR AND  
DRUMMER OFRI NEHEMYA*

**Releasing September 30 (Independent Release)**

South African-born, Jerusalem-based **Yosef-Gutman Levitt** is highly skilled on upright bass, but chose as his primary instrument the acoustic bass guitar. On ***Upside Down Mountain***, Levitt's first trio recording, he shares with the world what he has found on that beautiful instrument: **a warm, singing, bell-like high-register sound of his own, with a focus on simple, direct, endlessly expressive melodies.** "When I'm playing upper-register melody, I feel like that's the place I can expose my truth," Levitt declares.

The title *Upside Down Mountain*, according to Levitt, refers to "a story of a love so great, it's as if a mountain is being held over our heads that at any time could be dropped — a love that's compelling and leaves no room for even a shadow of a doubt."

Partnering with **Omri Mor** (piano) and **Ofri Nehemya** (drums) on this set of original pieces, **Levitt plays with a striking clarity and resolve as the trio's frequent lead melodic voice.** He plays what serves the music and the flowing, interactive rhythms of the trio. The result is a sound of joy and fulfillment. "I was flying the entire four days of recording," Levitt recalls. "I was flying, my soul was alive. It comes alive when I get to play with people like this. Omri is very emotionally intelligent and has an organic apprehension of style, whether it's hints of Moroccan-Andalusian vocabulary or even making the piano sound like a kora."

Nehemya, whose high-profile sideman credits include Shai Maestro, Avishai Cohen (bass), Omer Avital, Eli Degibri and more, is a 28-year-old "who's been playing beautifully since he was 16," Levitt says. "Now he's got the wisdom of a drummer at 70 — he's got *age* when he plays. And that musical maturity, that minimalism, is really important because I don't want to make music that's flashy or insincere in any way. The goal is to make music that is as clear and honest as possible. That's what I look for in musicians."

Levitt considers himself more an improviser than a composer. He conceived all the pieces for *Upside Down Mountain* in a single sitting, improvising "whatever flowed freely from my heart without thinking, editing or perfecting. I got my sound recorder ready and improvised for a few minutes, caught something, recorded it, named it. After a few hours I had material for an album and I sent it to my co-producer Gilad Ronen, who made sense of it."

**Raised on a farm roughly an hour from Johannesburg**, Levitt fed a passion for music that would take him to **Berklee College of Music** in Boston, followed by a tough grind as

a **jazz musician in New York for over a decade**. He worked thankless day gigs to afford hiring the likes of Lionel Loueke, Ben Monder, Robert Stillman, the late Take Toriyama and others for an unglamorous yet musically rewarding weekly gig.

Unfortunately, his time in New York was also a time of mounting musical frustration and disempowerment. Ultimately Levitt found his greatest happiness as an observant Jew, which allowed him to redefine himself and take charge of his life. He left the music business altogether, got married, started a family, and became highly successful as a tech entrepreneur. He moved to Jerusalem in 2009. By 2018, he returned to music and began to refine the distinctive bass guitar tone that has become his musical calling card.

In Israel, Levitt cuts a singular figure as an Orthodox Jewish improviser — there aren't many like him, if at all. He will never hide who he is, but he is not dogmatic, least of all when it comes to music. "I love playing with the people here," he says of his trio mates Mor and Nehemya of course, but also in general. "I don't require anyone to have a particular way of life. In Israel they totally run the gamut, and people are very intellectually honest. If you accept yourself then other people accept you."

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