



Oz Noy

BY JIMMY LESLIE

MUTANT MAESTRO OZ NOY MAKES A JAZZ NOISE that's undeniably different. It can be bouncy and beautiful with a pleasant tone one moment, and then quickly turn turbulent with gnarly distortions drenched in otherworldly effects. Above all, it grooves. The Strat freak twists melodic and discordant lines over gobs of greasy rhythm vamps that owe as much to the Apollo Theater as they do to Birdland.

Noy originally hails from Israel, where he was a seasoned studio and performance pro by age 16. By the time he relocated to New York City in 1996, he was fully armed with unreal rock, funk, blues, and pop chops. Noy soon landed gigs with some of the best in the Big Apple, including Nile Rogers, Richard Bona, Gavin DeGraw, and Roger Glover, as well as loads of television and film session work. He eventually became a fixture at the venerable Bitter End, and attracted top-shelf backing talent including drummers Anton Fig and Keith Carlock. Noy continues to play and record with both, as well as bassists Will Lee and James Genus—sometimes alternating trios within the same tune.

2002's *Oz Live* led to a deal with Magnatune Records, which released Noy's debut solo studio effort in 2005. *Ha!* was a tour de force of

infectious-yet-involved instrumentals, and featured a guest appearance by NYC guitar boss Mike Stern. Noy's new CD, *Fuzzy*, is similar, though generally less aggressive and more refined. It also represents Noy's recent sojourns to L.A., where he hooked up with drummer Vinnie Colaiuta and bassist Jimmy Johnson for three tracks.

What was it like growing up as a guitar player in Tel Aviv?

The Israeli pop and rock I grew up around was heavily influenced by American and British music, so it wasn't that different. I learned by playing Beatles songs. The weird thing for me was that I was really into '80s rock—shredding and tapping—and at the same time I was deep into jazz, especially Joe Pass, George Benson, Charlie Parker, and Wes Montgomery. I studied the Barry Harris method. He's a pianist and jazz educator who developed a specific, simple approach to bebop. When I hit a Stevie Ray Vaughan phase, I started playing his songs instrumentally. As I began to mix in James Brown and Stevie Wonder tunes, I realized I could do all my jazz stuff over those funky grooves, and my split personality came together.

