



Arts News

## Tweet, Tweet

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Genre-bending bands are nothing new. For decades The Clash fused punk with reggae. The Pogues have similarly drawn on punk rock energy to deliver their interpretations of Irish pub music. In the past decade or so, we have seen an increasing number of bands that have fused both Ashkenazi and Sephardi with more commercial music.

In most cases, the music borrows the beats and/or melodies from traditional forms of popular music, and the Jewish component is found in the language of the signing and/or themes of the songs. The resulting product thus appeals primarily to a Jewish audience with an appreciation for popular music.

Tweet, Tweet, Abraham Inc.'s debut release, defies this trend. The band, which bills this album as an "all-out klezmer-funk dance party," combines funk, klezmer, hip hop and jazz in a way that is neither Jewish nor black, and fans of any of these genres, especially funk and klezmer, would find this album pure candy for the ears. This supergroup consists of long established klezmer clarinetist David Krakauer, trombonist Fred Wesley, whose bona fides include work with James Brown and George Clinton, and Socalled, whose meshing of hip hop and Ashkenazi traditions have been reviewed in these pages previously. The sound is rounded out by a more-than-able backing band and guest vocalists.

The album opens with the title track, which finds Krakauer's clarinet and Wesley's trombone exchanging solos supported by a grooving beat. Socalled and guest rapper C Rayz Walz add energy and flavor. It is clear from the start that while these musicians are clearly serious about their work, they are also having some pretty serious fun, which shines through and is contagious.

The album continues with the instrumental "Moskowitz Mix," which finds Krakauer's clarinet kvetching of a disco beat. Vocals take center stage on "It's Not the Same (Figure It Out)," featuring C Rayz Walz on the mic followed by "The H Tune," a tricked-out version of "Hava Nagila" — sung gospel-style. Wesley takes the lead on the festive "Trombonic," before things slow down on "Push" and "Baleboste: A Beautiful Picture."

The latter of these, a meditation praising the role of strong women, can also be heard on Socalled's GhettoBlaster (2007) but without C Rayz Walz's crafty rhymes. "Fred the Tzadik" follows, not surprisingly featuring Wesley soloing over a funky disco beat with Krakauer sneaking around in the background and on breaks. The album ends with "Abe Inc Techno Mix." True to its name, this track would probably be better suited for the dance floor than this otherwise coherent album. It's not all that bad (for a club mix anyway) — it just doesn't seem to fit with the feel of the rest of the album.

Sonically, this album is solid, if not brilliant. Culturally, however, it is much more relevant. While there are many things that define Jewish and black communities and make each one unique, this album illustrates that there is still much territory to explore and promote dialogue and collaboration between the two communities.

As Socalled writes on the band's Web site, Abraham Inc. is about "bringing people together with music, celebrating differences and commonalities... Cultural hybrid vigour in yo'face." There really is no better way to put it.

