



NELS CLINE & JULIAN LAGE *ROOM*

Nels Cline is a major force as a guitarist and improviser, ever since he debuted on record in 1978 and as a leader in 1988. Named by *Rolling Stone* as one of 20 “new guitar gods” and one of the top 100 guitarists of all time, Cline has gained his widest fame as a member of acclaimed rock band Wilco since 2004. He’s known for a certain cranked-up experimental mayhem, the kind sometimes heard from his extraordinary trio The Nels Cline Singers, which released the well-received *MACROSCOPE* on Mack Avenue earlier in 2014. But throughout his career, Cline has undertaken projects, sometimes acoustic or semi-acoustic duos, highlighting an intimate and reflective approach that’s just as central to his artistry.

With ***ROOM***, Cline returns to Mack Avenue, creating a world of melodic beauty but also hard sonic edges and technical brilliance in the company of **Julian Lage**. At just 26, Lage has taken the world of jazz guitar by storm. *The New York Times* hails the “disarming spirit of generosity” in Lage’s music and notes the young guitarist’s “roots tangled up in jazz, folk, classical and country music.” In addition to his work with Mark O’Connor, the late Jim Hall, Anthony Wilson and a great many others, Lage leads his own groundbreaking groups as documented on the albums *Gladwell* and *Sounding Point* (the latter earning Lage a Grammy® nomination).

In a 2013 Q&A with *JazzTimes*, Lage described the Cline-Lage duo sound as “200 percent power,” and that’s exactly what comes through on ***ROOM***: an inspired collection of originals and collaborative pieces that run the full range from intricately composed and complex to free and spontaneous. Cline builds on the strength of his previous duo work with the likes of Vinny Golia, Zeena Parkins, Elliott Sharp, Thurston Moore, Carla Bozulich, Marc Ribot and not least of all the late West Coast bassist Eric Von Essen, to which the gorgeous dual-acoustic showcase “Whispers From Eve” is dedicated. Lage, for his part, has worked in duo settings with David Grisman, Martin Taylor, John Abercrombie, Taylor Eigsti and others.

The setup on ***ROOM*** is simple. Lage is on the left channel, Cline on the right, and they play just four guitars total: Cline a 1965 Gibson Barney Kessel archtop and a 1962 Gibson J-200 acoustic; Lage his tried-and-true Linda Manzer archtop and a 1939 Martin 000-18 acoustic. The sound is pristine, alive with personality and contrast, improvisational daring and jaw-dropping precision. “These are all ‘live’ performances,” Cline adds—there are no overdubs.

From the rolling arpeggiated figures and tight unison lines of “Abstract 12” and the deep, grooving interplay of “Racy,” it’s clear that ***ROOM*** is not a casual free-blowing session, though it sacrifices nothing in terms of unbounded creative energy. “The Scent Of Light,” one of the two longest pieces, moves through varied emotional terrain, from poetic rubato musings and rough abstraction to sweeping, expansive harmonic patterns and passages of an almost mathematical rhythmic exactitude. “The climactic coda goes from strummed chord clusters (non-notated) in 7/8 to 11/8 on cue,” Cline says, noting a certain kinship with “Odd End”—which is “mostly in 7/8 with some good old 4/4 thrown in here and there. I never write in odd time signatures to be clever or anything. I just hear music that way.”

“Blues, Too,” inspired by the late Jim Hall, first appeared as a Nels Cline Singers piece on the group’s 2004 release *The Giant Pin* as well as the 2010 double-disc *Initiate*. “Since I met Julian through Jim,” Cline says, “it seemed fitting to try it with Julian playing the bass part. The song entails certain Jim Hall references, such as the theme itself, and the sudden direction to play blues in E-flat but only for a few seconds before going into a free section—a sort of chamber music/instant composition space redolent of the Jimmy Giuffre 3 and other innovations of late ‘50s and early ‘60s jazz. Later there’s an up-tempo drone section on an A7 chord, in whatever time signature and tempo we feel like that day—it’s an homage to Jim’s frequent use of Latin-tinged, open-string/idiomatic areas. With Julian, I feel that the piece is closest to my original idea and intent.” Indeed, all of ***ROOM*** is a dedication to Hall.

Cline named the inventive “Amenette” by merging Ornette Coleman’s name with that of Scott Amendola, the drummer for The Nels Cline Singers. The song’s bright and knotty free-bop feel contrasts richly with “Freesia/The Bond,” a mini-suite of sorts that reaches peaks of lyrical grandeur, and is dedicated to Japanese musician Yuka C. Honda. But the duo just as quickly switches gears on the improvised acoustic piece “Waxman”: “This was one of four improvisations that Nels and I did at the start of the session,” Lage says, “and it stood out because of its longer unfolding narrative. It feels like a composition in terms of its arc so we decided to name it, and ‘Waxman’ was what we came up with!”

Cline and Lage remain on acoustic guitars to end **ROOM** with “Calder,” a reference to the visionary sculptor Alexander Calder. “I have a Calder mobile that my mom sent me years ago when I moved back east,” Lage says. “It hangs in my apartment and I just love it. So though I wrote the tune first and the title came later, I felt like the presence of the mobile fit the mode of the piece well.”

On **ROOM** one hears two guitar masters who span the generations, comfortable in every conceivable role, meeting the daunting challenges of these compositions while giving themselves over to the moment. In the *JazzTimes* Q&A, Cline credited the duo for revitalizing his playing overall: “I was burned out on touring, burned out on myself...and when Julian and I started playing together it kicked my ass hard. At the same time it inspired me and refreshed my soul.” Lage replied, “Likewise.”

Nels Cline & Julian Lage • ROOM
Mack Avenue Records • Release Date: November 25, 2014

For more information on **Nels Cline**, please visit nelscline.com
For more information on **Julian Lage**, please visit julianlage.com

For media information, please contact **Fully Altered Media**:
Matt Merewitz • matt@fullyaltered.com • 215-629-6155
Stephen Buono • stephen@fullyaltered.com • 267-241-5316

For press materials on **Nels Cline & Julian Lage**, Mack Avenue artists or Mack Avenue Record labels in general (including album covers, promotional photos and logos), please visit media.mackavenue.com

MACK AVENUE • the road to great music • mackavenue.com

#