



Khiov Music LP 43025
 The John Scofield Band: Überjam
 Format: 2LPs 33rpm / gatefold sleeve

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In the jazz world, there are artists who are consistent but predictable and artists who are unpredictable but inconsistent. John Scofield, meanwhile, is an impressive example of a jazzman who is both unpredictable and consistent. You never know what the risk-taking guitarist will do from one album to the next, but he rarely provides an album that is flat-out disappointing. Überjam is a major departure from 2000's "Works For Me", the Verve date that preceded it. While "Works For Me" is essentially a straight-ahead post-bop outing and employs acoustic-oriented players, like pianist Brad Mehldau and bassist Christian McBride, "Überjam" is pure, unadulterated fusion. This album always has a jazz mentality -- "Überjam" is as spontaneous, free-spirited, and uninhibited as any bop session that was recorded in Rudy Van Gelder's studio in the '50s -- but on "Überjam", having a jazz mentality doesn't mean excluding elements of funk, rock, and, at times, hip-hop and club music. To those who fancy themselves jazz purists, the phrase 'pure, unadulterated fusion' will sound like an oxymoron; if jazz is fused, how can it be real, authentic jazz? But then, George Duke hit the nail on the head when he asserted that jazz was always fusion; even back in the days of Jelly Roll Morton and King Oliver, jazz had a variety of influences. It simply became more fused when Miles Davis recorded "Bitches Brew" and "In A Silent Way" in the late '60s. And speaking of Davis, much of "Überjam" reflects Scofield's years with that restless trumpeter. Like many of Davis' fusion efforts, "Überjam" has no problem being cerebral and funky at the same time. The material tends to be abstract and intellectual, but not at the expense of grit. "Überjam" is yet another excellent album from an improviser who refuses to be predictable.

Recording: July, August and September 2001 at Avatar Studios, New York, by Joe Ferla
 Production: Susan Scofield "Überjam" - John Scofield (el-g); Avi Bortnick (g); Karl Denson (fl, sax); John Medeski (org, clavinet, mellotron); Jesse Murphy (b); Adam Deitch (dr, rap, perc)