

*What the press has said about:*

**THE ED PALERMO BIG BAND THE GREAT UN-AMERICAN SONGBOOK: VOLS.1&2 CUNEIFORM FEB. 2017**

**“...this ace bandleader-arranger is dead serious about his song-renovations, striving for exceptional music that contains levels of technical resourcefulness and emotional exposition associated with premium jazz.**

**Palermo bloody well nails it.** Of all the Beatles songs recorded by big bands over the years, his treatments of “Eleanor Rigby,” “I Wanna Be Your Man” and three more Liverpool favorites are found near the front of the pack.

Soloist Katie Jacoby’s electric violin hits sweet spots...and the reed, brass and rhythm sections are marvelously crisp and alert throughout. ... Bruce Daniel and Ringo Starr’s cousin Mick Starkey are impressive singers...

**Palermo’s modern alchemists spin everything they touch into gold... [4 stars]”**

- Frank-John Hadley, *DownBeat*, June 2017

**“...The Great Un-American Songbook: Volumes I & II has close to two hours of prime UK material (think Cream, the Beatles, King Crimson, Jethro Tull and more)...stitched together to form a cohesive musical and conceptual whole. ...there are recurring characters and a loose narrative. Palermo... crafts swinging large ensemble jazz interpretations of both well-known and obscure tracks...which breathe new life into these older songs.**

... One major highpoint of the first disc is a medley which includes...“We Love You” which segues into...the Beatles’ “Eleanor Rigby,” highlighted by an exhilarating solo from electric violinist Katie Jacoby (who suggests early Jean-Luc Ponty). ... **The results are phenomenal. ...**

...UK prog-rock supplies CD 2’s medley centerpiece. The first part...contains...ELP’s “Bitches Crystal,” ...Procol Harum’s “The Wreck of the Hesperus,”... ...Radiohead’s “The Tourist,”... segues into a medley inside a medley, where Palermo reveals the common ground among the Beatles’ “Don’t Bother Me” and Miles Davis’ “Nardis.” ... **there is undeniable depth as well as requisite wit which permeates Palermo’s double-album package. These are not throwaway arrangements, and there is plenty of musical virtuosity. ...Palermo...proves jazz is alive and well, and can sound funny and serious at the same time.”**

-Doug Simpson, *Audiophile Audition*, June 13, 2017, [www.audaud.com](http://www.audaud.com)

**“...One of the best at stretching the limits of pop is Ed Palermo. ...The Great Un-American Songbook, Volume 1 & 2, is an ambitious 2-CD set of 21 pop songs arranged for his big band. The musical results are lively, passionate and just outside enough to engage the most experienced listener.**

...pop music of the sixties and seventies from some of the biggest names in British rock. **The album features familiar songs from The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and Cream, but the real surprises are selections made famous by prog-rock enthusiasts King Crimson, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, and Jethro Tull.** ...Palermo has honed his craft as an arranger who knows how to write for his group of talented players. ...they respond...with powerful solos and eloquent harmonies...

**...most everything succeeds on this big record...** I was really impressed with his version of “We Love You” by The Rolling Stones, which segues into “Eleanor Rigby” by Lennon and McCartney. ... Highlights on disc two include the Nice/Green Day mashup...”

– John Corcelli, *Critic at Large*, April 5, 2017, [www.criticsatlarge.ca](http://www.criticsatlarge.ca)

**“RINGER OF THE WEEK ... The 17 piece jazz orchestra plus two vocalists takes rock songs of the 60s and 70s through the puree’ of modern jazz sensibilities, and it works to astonishing success. ...**

Two, count ‘em, two pieces from King Crimson, INCLUDING a riveting “21<sup>st</sup> Century Schizoid Man,” and a hip flute on a read of Jethro Tull’s “Beggar’s Farm.” A couple pieces by Jeff Beck include a string laden “Diamond Dust” while Cream’s “As You Said” and Emerson, Lake and Palmer’s “Bitches Crystal” mix swing with rich harmonies. The take of Arthur Brown’s “Fire” is a gas, and even bands as obscure as Blodwyn Pig and “The Nice” get a place in the spotlight. ... **This 2 disc set is BOSS!”**

- George W. Harris, *Jazz Weekly*, June 1, 2017, [www.jazzweekly.com](http://www.jazzweekly.com)

**“...an interesting and effervescent big band album with saxophonist and composer Ed Palermo's talented jazz orchestra...for both jazz and rock fans.** Beginning...with The Beatles, the band bounces through "Good Morning, Good Morning" and a violin tinged version of "Eleanor Rigby." There are short sections of jokey banter between some of the tracks... **The more complex music of King Crimson is just the ticket for this group.**... "Larks' Tongues in Aspic, Part One"... The organ drenched madness of Arthur Brown's "Fire" gets things moving again before the group returns to where it all started with a trio of Beatles songs to finish the album. **This may be an exercise in nostalgia, but the arrangements and the high quality of the ensemble playing and soloists keep the music fresh and interesting.”**

-Tim Niland, *Music and More*, April 12, 2017, [jazzandblues.blogspot.com](http://jazzandblues.blogspot.com)

“Famous for his bent orchestrations of Zappa compositions, saxophonist/arranger Palermo here digs into 60s and 70s British Invasion and prog rock. ...**Anyone should be entertained by guitarist Bruce McDaniel’s uncanny vocal impersonations and in-character, comic, interstitial commentary, the powerhouse energy of the 18-piece EPBB, and the gripping soloists, most notably electric violinist Katie Jacoby. File with Sun Ra, Sex Mob, and Microscopic Septet in “fun jazz.”** [Rating: Music 4.5/5 Sonics 4/5]“

- Derk Richardson, *The Absolute Sound*, Sep 26, 2017

“... There is...a lot of jazz here. There is a lot of rock music, too... There are some cool Beatles related skits sprinkled throughout. ...**it's all delivered with a great sense of humor. All in all, this is a fun ride.”**

-Gary Hill, *Music Street Journal*, [www.musicstreetjournal.com](http://www.musicstreetjournal.com)

“...Ed Palermo...is of the generation of jazz players that proudly acknowledges the impact of non-jazz inspirations. As if to drive that point home—and perhaps vex...the “jazz police” with their pronounced devotion to *The Great American Songbook*—his latest opus pays tribute to popular songs (mostly) from the ‘60s-70s British rock canon. **Songs by King Crimson, The Nice, Jethro Tull, Cream, Traffic and, of course, those Beatles get the big band treatment in a manner evoking the great postSwing Era jazz orchestras of Count Basie, Woody Herman, Thad Jones/Mel Lewis and Gil Evans— majestic, intricately and briskly arranged and swinging mightily.** ... “Eleanor Rigby”...Palermo gives this version a muscular yet muted melodramatic grandeur...a sardonic sense of swing... Cream’s “As You Said” gets an Ellingtonian sweep... The pick-to-click highlight of this set is a medley of Miles Davis’ “Nardis” and George Harrison’s bitter “Don’t Bother Me”... **If you like your jazz serious or hate rock music, this is not for you. If you enjoy classic rock and big band jazz served up with a sense of fun, make a splash here (and wait up for the bonus track).”**

- Mark Keresman, *The New York City Jazz Record*, May 2017

“...it’s a thrilling rollercoaster ride through the last 50-odd years of prominent musical Brits filtered through a decidedly modern big band lens. ...

Add to this the seamlessness of the program (each track merges brilliantly with the next) and *The Great Un-American Songbook Volumes I & II* plays more like an even more out-there Girl Talk with its amalgamation of pop hits, direct and indirect lyrical quotes, and unrelenting beat. ... **This type of playful approach to otherwise well-known material helps lend even the most familiar songs here an exciting air of newness, with the original’s melody popping up now and then to make itself known amidst the myriad instrumentalists** giving life to Palermo’s orchestral melding of pop/rock and jazz.

While there are tongue-in-cheek elements littered throughout...the music never once...goes for the low-hanging fruit. ...**Palermo’s arrangements of something as esoteric as King Crimson’s “Larks’ Tongue in Aspic, Part Two”...are played ingeniously straightforward, paying the necessary respect to the originals while making them something wholly new and different. It’s a brilliant bit of musical reimagining that has long been the hallmark of progressive jazz figures (John Coltrane’s “My Favorite Things,” anyone?) and proves well-suited to Palermo’s strengths as an arranger.** “21st Century Schizoid Man”...comes charging out of the gates like an unhinged Glenn Miller or Tommy Dorsey Orchestra piece that’s been granted...amphetamines.

... Bookending the program with the Beatles’ “Good Morning, Good Morning” and “Good Night”, Palermo affords the set **an easy point of entry and exit for listeners...hesitant to approach...modern big band music.** In-between is a brilliant amalgamation of both the well-known...and the somewhat obscure...that makes for an exciting listen. ...

**There are countless moments of intricately virtuosic instrumental interplay...always in service of the arrangement...**

...**The Great Un-American Songbook: Volumes I & II is a wickedly enjoyable listen from top to bottom. [Rating: 8/10]**”

-John Paul, *Popmatters*, July 25, 2017, www.popmatters.com

“**This is big band jazz, with a smile and a grab bag of virtuosic fun.** ...the passion for the music comes through loud and proud even as songs by **The Beatles, King Crimson, Cream, Traffic, Arthur Brown, and many more, are twisted and tangled to within a big bold inch of their lives.**

**...some tracks are given a reverential reworking and others are turned on their heads...**

...the British invasion 'theme' is expanded upon to...include an excellent stab at Miles Davis' "Nardis" and Radiohead's "The Tourist"... However it's the least British and possibly most anti-American 'mash-up'...of "America", from *A West Side Story* and Green Day's "American Idiot", which comes off as KELP...and explodes loudest...

Where things falter, for me...are the little skits...needless on an album that engages, entertains and amuses on its own terms. ...

...**Ed Palermo and his Big Band are clearly having a ball as they reveal *The Great Un-American Songbook.* ...”**

- Steven Reid, *Sea of Tranquility*, June 4, 2017, www.seaoftranquility.org

“...**top-class big band impressions of a raft of seminal – and occasionally obscure – tracks from early British rock bands like Cream, Traffic and The Stones.** ...It only took half a listen to their version of Traffic’s “Low Spark of High Heeled Boys” to get excited – very excited – by what could be in this collection. And I have not been disappointed. ...

...**there is very little to fault. The selections virtually all work really well and evoke the ‘sixties from the inside; the musicianship is excellent and many of the arrangements are thoughtful and clever.**

...**this set brilliantly balances the feel of the original songs and the integrity of big band jazz.**”

- Derek Walker, *The Phantom Tollbooth*, March 27, 2017, www.tollbooth.org

“The immensely kind and always surprising Ed Palermo is back with a new album. For "The Great Un-American Songbook - Volumes I & II", Ed took a look at his favorite British pop and rock tunes and gave them the unmistakable Palermo-treatment... **This 2 CD set sounds absolutely great. I've been playing it over and over again the last couple of weeks and it's just fabulous. Lots of Zappa teasers in there as well. Highly recommended !!”**

- *United Mutations*, April 10, 2017

“**In this era of Great Again , the very American big band of Ed Palermo offers us a British Invasion in its own way.** Beatles' interpretations , of course, with Good Morning or I Wanna Be Your Man (with Mick Starkey , Ringo's cousin!), Stones ( We Love You ), Jeff Beck ( Definitely Maybe ) or King Crimson (one of the best versions of Lark's Tongues In Aspic 2) . ...this one is loaded with Zappian quotations. ... **[Rating: 4/5 stars]**”

- Rejean Beaucage, *VOIR*, March 23, 2017, www.voir.ca

“...The Beatles are represented by five tracks. The best and funniest is Eleanor Rigby ... extra brass and reeds add a Penny Lane brightness to the album’s benedictory concluding cut, Goodnight, which has an ending way too hilarious to give away. ... **King Crimson’s Larks’ Tongues in Aspic, Part Two is the album’s second-most epic track, with a stark yet symphonic sweep that’s arguably better than the original, punctuated by a moody Bill Straub tenor sax solo over Bruce McDaniel’s clustering guitar. Palermo and crew also improve on another King Crimson tune, 21st Century Schizoid Man, transforming sludgy mathrock into jaunty swing...**

**That Palermo would cover Procol Harum’s toweringly elegaic Wreck of the Hesperus rather than, say, Whiter Shade of Pale, speaks to the depth and counterintuitivity of this album... for a grand total of 21 tracks, the band’s batting average is more than 900. A characteristically robust, joyously entertaining accomplishment...”**

- Delarue, “Twistedly Hilarious Big Band Fun with Ed Palermo’s Reinventions of Psychedelic Rock Classics,” *New York Music Daily*, May 6, 2017

**“...the results are pretty amazing. On *The Great Un-American Songbook Volumes 1 & 2* Ed and the gang take the faintest of melodies (The Stones’ “We Love You,”...) and flesh them out with ensemble horn parts, dazzling solo work, and robust percussion, sometimes peppering the stew with...unexpected musical seasonings... More intrinsically melodic songs, like “Eleanor Rigby,” keep things closer to the source, albeit tweaking...tempo and harmony...while giving us those exquisite solos...**

***The Great Un-American Songbook Volumes 1&2 is a generous 21 tracks of big band schizophrenia, and I mean that in the best possible way. Ed takes rock songs – both sophisticated and unsophisticated – and transforms them into high-end big-band compositions infused with energy and humor, and always infused with top-flight musicianship. ... There’s a strong core rock band in the center of the mix on songs like “I Wanna’ Be Your Man” and Green Day’s “American Idiot,” but it always manages to come back to jazz, sometimes hot, sometimes cool and swinging.***

**Those who want to play ‘where’s Frank’ will have a ball. Phrases from “Inca Roads,”..and others..are scattered throughout ... Of course, this being an Ed Palermo project, there’s an element of humor that winds throughout the two discs...Liverpoolian-sounding friends Mick Starkey (Ringo’s ‘cousin’), his semi-fictional friend, Pete Best, and their...veddy British manager, Edward Loog Wanker III. A word of advice: ...there might be one of those sneaky ‘hidden tracks’ we used to enjoy back in the day. You’ve been warned. Now do the right and proper thing and order this album, for Pete’s sake ...and Mick’s.**

-Bert Saraco, *The Phantom Tollbooth*, March 26, 2017, [www.tollbooth.org](http://www.tollbooth.org)

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#### **RECENT FEATURES/ ARTICLES / INTERVIEWS on THE ED PALERMO BIG BAND**

##### **JAZZIZ**

**“Funny as He Goes: Bandleader Ed Palermo laces his seriously good music with wit and irreverence”, by Michael Roberts, *Jazziz*, May 2017**

**“...While this defense of smart humor sums up one aspect of Palermo, whose discography features vibrant originals and witty big-band reinventions of rock songs, he’s much more than a genre-busting jester. His skills as an arranger impressed the late Gil Evans, and he’s earned the respect of contemporary heavyweights such as bassist/composer Christian McBride. “I know at least 30 musicians who think he’s one of the greatest musicians and arrangers in the world,” McBride says. ... The first time [Mike] Keneally sat in with Palermo and his big band, he expected to play...“fairly standard Zappa cover versions—but found out that Ed had taken wild liberties in a really creative way. He has breathtaking approach to re-contextualizing everything in a fantasia that swoops from Frank’s work to Todd Rundgren to Wayne Shorter to whatever – just traveling through the history of music. I was absolutely flabbergasted.” ...**

**From the beginning, Palermo...ignored the supposed barriers between musical styles. ...”**

##### **JAZZ TIMES**

**"Overdue Ovation: Ed Palermo - The Gil Evans of prog-rock", by Mac Randall, *Jazz Times*, June 1, 2017**

*article/interview excerpt:*

**“...Monday evening at the Iridium at 51st... An 18-piece big band is being led by a man in a huge top hat, white gloves and black cape. The music they’re playing is a raucous, cleverly arranged mashup of songs from the ’60s and early ’70s, mostly of the progressive-rock variety. Moody Blues hits collide with items from Frank Zappa’s back catalog. Emerson, Lake & Palmer’s “Bitches Crystal” briefly pays a visit to Wayne Shorter’s “Footprints” before morphing into King Crimson’s “21st Century Schizoid Man,” ... Tonight is a special night, the release party for...*The Great Un-American Songbook: Volumes I & II* (Cuneiform)...**

**“Arranging is the fun part for me,” [says Palermo] ... “Zappa used to call it ‘dressing up the song.’ Hearing an arrangement played is the cherry on top, but the process of writing, when the ideas are flowing, that’s the main meal. Sometimes I’ll be working on a song and something about it reminds me of another song. Instead of ignoring it, my ADD tells me, ‘No, put that in there.’ And people talk about ADD as if it’s a bad thing! ... if a day goes by without arranging, I miss it.””**

##### **MUSICGUY247: A celebration of people involved in music**

**“Ed Palermo - Big Band Leader - Zappa music”, interview by Robert von Bernewitz, [Musicguy247](http://Musicguy247), July 6, 2017**

*excerpt:*

**“... “The Great Un-American Songbook Volumes I & II”... features arrangements of classic British Invasion rock and roll music from the 60s, 70s and beyond. ... With Ed’s arrangements, and the superior talent in the band, you will “Swing, Twist and Shout” to the**

music.

... The Ed Palermo Big Band is a well rehearsed and polished unit... go check them out live... they will not disappoint.”